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and
JANE CARLYLE

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JANE WELSH CARLYLE

Drawing by Samuel Laurence, 1849. In Carlyle House, Chelsea.

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JANE WELSH and JANE CARLYLE

by

ELIZABETH DREW

WITH FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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The letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle are published in the following volumes:

Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle. Edited D. G. Ritchie. 1889.

Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle. Edited J. A. Froude. 3 volumes. 1883.

New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle. Edited Alexander Carlyle. 2 volumes. 1903.

The Love Letters of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh. Edited Alexander Carlyle. 2 volumes. 1909.

Jane Welsh Carlyle. Letters to her Family. Edited Leonard Huxley. 1924.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

'Bah! I wish I could snort like Cavaignac!' exclaims Jane Carlyle to her husband, as she describes the humbug of one of their acquaintances; and some such exclamation, probably seasoned a little more highly with her characteristic pungency of phrase, would surely have been her own comment on most of what has been written about herself. Like many other clever women, she would have enjoyed writing an autobiography.

> O, if I might write my own biography from beginning to end—without reservation or false colouring—it would be an invaluable document for my countrywomen in more than one particular; but "decency forbids"!

In life, outside the circle of her closest intimates, Jane Carlyle was, indeed, the most proud and reserved of women, 'as proud and tenacious of her dignity as a savage chief,' says Mrs. Oli-

phant. She destroyed at once a journal whose existence an acquaintance had discovered; what she hated in her friend Geraldine Jewsbury was that 'lack of spiritual decency' which seemed to her on a par with running about the streets naked; and we can be in no doubt at all how she would have regarded the publication of the letters to her husband and to her dearest friends, which have made the privacies and secrecies of her body and mind and personal life as much a matter for open gossip as the tastes in clothes or pets of the most publicity-loving 'movie' star. Jane had occasion enough in life to bewail her impulsiveness. Impulsively-made friendships often proved awkward to her, impulsive actions often landed her in difficulties, and her habit of impulsive letter-writing has pursued her with its consequences after death. As she says to her young cousin Jeannie Welsh (Babbie) in the days of their close sympathy, 'I have got into the way of *splashing* off whatever is on my mind when I write to you, without forethought or backthought.' She did the same to her husband, whether she was in good

spirits or in bad, in a mood of generous affection or in one of black anger, and, as a result, her memory after death has paid the penalty for her impulsiveness, every bit as much as her feelings and convenience paid the same penalty in life.

It is ironic that it should have been Carlyle himself who made the whole thing possible. Immediately after her death, in his 'total lameness and impotency for work,' the poor fond old man found a certain solace in his heartbroken loneliness in the 'mournful fascination' of living among her letters and journals, and in preparing a selection from them for publication. He could never make up his mind whether actual publication was advisable, but he never had the heart definitely to decide against it; neither did he destroy the sketch of her life he had written, nor such portions of the journals and correspondence as he had omitted from his collection. He left, however, strict instructions to his executors that in no circumstances was the sketch to become public, declaring that he means to burn it before his own death, but that should he fail to do so, and

the notebook fall into the hands of friends, 'I solemnly forbid them, each and all, to publish this Bit of Writing as it stands here.' He insists too that no printing of the letters was to take place for at least twenty years, and that the love-letters, which had been mislaid at the time, should be at once burnt if they came to light. 'Let no third party read them; let no *printing* of them, nor of any part of them, be even thought of by those who love me!' Then the man referred to by Carlyle as 'my kind, considerate, and ever faithful friend, James Anthony Froude,' completed the 'spiritual indecency' which Carlyle himself had made possible, and within a few weeks of Carlyle's death he had published the sketch called *Jane Welsh Carlyle* in the *Reminiscences*. During the following two years he produced *The Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, and quoted largely from the love-letters in his history of Carlyle's early life. As literary executor he had access to all the material, and he used his authority to alter Carlyle's own selection of the letters—adding some, omitting some, and tampering with

others. He had a certain thesis about the relations of Carlyle and his wife which he was determined to uphold, and with the most unblushing lack of editorial scrupulousness he manipulated his materials to fit his theory, and to construct what were, in fact, largely fictitious portraits of both his heroine and his hero—or perhaps we should say, his villain! The picture of Carlyle in his domestic relations, as a sort of cross between a spoilt child and a dyspeptic hyena, and of Jane as his heroic, sensitive, delicate, neglected, and misunderstood wife, sacrificed to a life of menial drudgery, starved of affection and companionship, with her shrinking, loving heart spurned by the callous selfishness of her husband—these pictures are familiar to all readers of Froude. The same myth was handed on in the sentimental imbecilities of Mrs. Ireland's *Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle*. No woman has needed more to be saved from her friends. Carlyle, whose loyalty and love towards her never faltered through her life, let his own devotion be the means by which her privacy was betrayed. Froude, haunted in his dreams, as he

said, by her 'pale, drawn, suffering face,' and captivated by her charm, paid her the degrading disservice of printed perjury. As a result, Jane has never been a personality studied impersonally as she was; she has always been a subject for controversy; some one to take sides about. Her portrait painters have spent their time sketching in a pedestal and halo, or in adding wart after wart to her nose. It is, of course, quite possible to argue that no one can claim rights after death over his own secret history, if he has actually put it out of his own power to keep the secret. People who wish the truth about themselves to perish with them should be careful not to leave diaries and not to write letters which may give them away. But even if privacy cannot logically be demanded from the grave, any shade may reasonably demand that if the facts of his indiscretions are to be published, they should at least be the true facts; and he may reasonably resent the facts of his secret history being tampered with, and false pictures of it being published. If this be so, Jane Welsh Carlyle may

surely reasonably appeal to posterity against the injustices which it has inflicted on her in that way. Just because her first editor defended her so unfairly, so her later critics have attacked her equally unfairly. Because Froude made her out an Amelia Sedley, Mr. Alexander Carlyle makes Carlyle out like the hero of *The Idylls of the King;* because Froude paints Carlyle as an irritable egotist, Sir James Crichton-Browne paints Jane as a hypochondriacal neurotic; because Froude accepted Miss Geraldine Jewsbury's stories of Jane's unhappiness as evidence, Mr. D. A. Wilson accepts second- or even third-hand stories of her physical and moral blemishes as evidence; because Froude suppressed or garbled all the passages in the letters which disproved his theory, the modern critics underline and isolate all the passages in the letters which they think prove theirs.

The root of the whole matter is perhaps the obsession of the last two generations with questions of conduct, and with discussing the right and wrong of human attitudes and actions as part of the groundwork of literary criticism. General pub-

lic opinion of the nineteenth century held rigidly to a certain moral, social, and religious pattern, as if in sober earnest it believed that pattern to embody Ultimate Truth. Its main interest, therefore, in human beings and their achievements was the question how far they identified themselves with that pattern, because it was to just that degree that they were socially and humanly valuable. Artistic merits alone counted for nothing. Hence the, to us, amazing statement of Crabb Robinson that Southey will have utterly ruined the sale of the first edition of *The Essays of Elia* by remarking in his review of the book in the *Quarterly* that it 'wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original'; hence the moral ground of Thackeray's criticism of Swift, with Carlyle's own acidly sensible comment on it, 'I wish I could persuade Thackeray that the test of greatness in a man is not whether he would like to meet the man at a tea-party'; hence, too, the impassioned concern of the public as to whether Carlyle was a Christian and a kind husband as well as a vivid historian, and the insistence by critics

on whether Jane was a bad wife or whether she believed in the immortality of the soul. But such criticism gets us nowhere. We may think that Jane was a bad wife, or we may think that she was a domestic martyr; but in either case we cannot possibly see her justly if we think of her only as the one or as the other. We may delight in her astringent scepticism, or we may be pious commentators who find her godlessness 'a rather disenchanting element in her character'; but the reality of that character is unaffected by either opinion. Whether we approve of her or disapprove of her is a personal matter, and she does not live in our approval or disapproval. She lives in the whole human reality which her letters create. She was a living, rejoicing, and suffering human being. A creature who was once a child and then a girl and then a woman: who was wrought upon by home and parents and teachers and books, by her husband and by her friends, by certain tissues of body and nerves, and by all the unseen weight of the domestic and social and moral traditions of her environment. It is all this which it

is the province of criticism to discover and to present.

The actions of others in publishing her letters have made it possible for the reader of today to know Jane Welsh and Jane Carlyle as none of her own closest friends ever knew her. We possess an unbroken series of her letters from the year when she was eighteen to the very day of her death, when she was sixty-five, and she is never out of our sight and hearing for more than, at most, a few weeks of that time. The present sketch, however, traces no exact chronology of her life. It was a life which had few events. Visits to Scotland and to a few places in the south of England were her only changes from Chelsea. At No. 5 Cheyne Row she passed from young womanhood to middle age and from middle age to the threshold of old age, with little to mark the passage of the years but the publication of her husband's books and the slow shifting of her circle of friends. Her personality created her life: the spirit in which she lived it as daughter, as wife, as housekeeper, as hostess, as friend, as correspondent. As such her own world watched her, and met her, and re-

ported on her, finding that personality as complex as the reader of the letters today finds it—at one moment feeling as antagonized as Robert Browning and summing her up as a hard, unlovable woman, at another as fascinated as the gentleman in the coach, who, although a complete stranger and she a middle-aged woman, felt impelled to go miles out of his way in order to return her the parasol she had left behind. A living, human, baffling paradox! So loving and so cynical, so sympathetic and so harsh, so intolerant and so patient, so kind and so cruel, so clear-sighted and so blind. As Charlotte Cushman, the American actress, concluded, 'A combination rare and strange exists in that plain, keen, unattractive, and yet *inescapable* woman!' So much the most detached and impersonal critic may allow, but those of us whose 'partiality' would like to add a little more may echo Mrs. Charles Darwin's almost grudging admission, when she had read the *Letters and Memorials*—but echo it with more of the heartiness and warmth of voice which was Jane's own tone—'One gets fond of her through everything!'

JANE WELSH

JANE WELSH

I

'Too 'cute for a woman, I'm afraid . . . an over 'cute woman's no better than a long-tailed sheep —she'll fetch none the better price for that.' So Mr. Tulliver regretfully summed up Maggie, and so Jane Welsh, as a little girl as intelligent and sensitive as Maggie, soon found out for herself. Later she writes caustically, 'He was a wise man who thanked the Gods that they had not made him a woman. There are twenty chances to one that he would not have been *wise* if they had,' and the child was mother to the girl if we are to believe the stories she used to tell of her own childhood. She early realized that for the ' 'cute,' the lot of man is far easier than the lot of woman, and she started life with her tastes all boyish and her ambitions all masculine. She longed to learn Latin 'like a boy,' and would go to bed with a

weight tied to her ankle, to encourage her to waken and work at four o'clock in the morning; she endeavoured to show her equality with a class of boys in Euclid by punching the nose of one of them till it bled; she risked her neck to prove that she too could cross a bridge along its narrow parapet. When she was nine she decided that if she could not be a boy she could at least behave like a Roman, and in later life, she wrote an account in one of her notebooks of the effect of her introduction to Virgil at about that age:

It wasn't my religion alone that my Latin Studies influenced; my whole manner of being was imbued with them. Would I prevent myself from doing a selfish or cowardly thing, I didn't say to myself, "You mustn't; *if you do* you will go to Hell hereafter"; nor yet, "*If you do, you will be whipt here*"; but I said to myself simply and grandly, "*A Roman wouldn't have done it,*" and that sufficed under ordinary temptations. Again, when I had done something heroic—when for instance I had caught a gander which hissed at me, by the neck and flung him to the right about, it was not a "good child" that *I* thought myself, for whom the half-crown bestowed on me was fit reward; in my own

mind I had "deserved well of the Republic" and aspired to a "civic crown"! But the classical world in which I lived and moved was best indicated in the Tragedy of my Doll. It had been intimated to me by one whose wishes were law, that a young lady *in Virgil* should for consistency's sake drop her Doll. So the Doll being *judged*, must be made an end of; and I . . . quickly decided *how*. She should end as Dido ended, that Doll! as the Doll of a young lady in Virgil should end! With her dresses, which were many and sumptuous, her four-posted bed, a faggot or two of cedar allumettes, a few sticks of cinnamon, a few cloves and a nutmeg! I *non ignara futuri* constructed her funeral pyre—*sub auras*, of course; and the new Dido, having placed herself in the bed, with help, spoke thro' my lips the last sad words of Dido the first, which I had then all by heart as pat as A B C. . . . The Doll having thus spoken, *pallida morte futura*, kindled the pile and stabbed herself with a penknife by way of Tyrian sword. Then, however, in the moment of seeing my poor Doll blaze up—for being stuffed with bran she took fire and was all over in no time—in that supreme moment my affection for her blazed up also, and I shrieked and would have saved her and couldn't, and went on shrieking till everybody within hearing flew to me and bore me off in a plunge of tears—an epitome of most of one's

"heroic sacrifices" it strikes me, magnanimously resolved on, ostentatiously gone about, repented of at the last moment, and bewailed with an outcry.

In the same notebook she describes, too, how, just as Virgil could not save her from her passionate human regret for her doll, so it could not save her feeling the injustice which made man the leader in courtship, or save her the heartache of unrequited love! Her whole childish personality is in the story she tells of her first love affair. It, also, occurred when she was nine. The Boy was the son of an artillery officer, and she tells how, at a dance, dressed in her best—'a white Indian muslin trimmed with *twelve* rows of satin ribbon' —secure too in the knowledge that she knew Latin and danced beautifully and had long eyelashes—she suffered the humiliating indignity of being disdained by the Boy; more effectively disdained, indeed, than even Elizabeth Bennet was disdained by Mr. Darcy; for the Boy not only ignored her but danced with another girl, 'a fair, fat, sheep-looking thing, with next to no sense.' She tells how he continued to scorn her and she

to love him, and how, when his father's regiment was leaving Haddington, she thought of a plot to get possession of a picture of the Boy as a baby. This was to take her 'gold filigree needle-case' and to offer it to the Boy's mother in exchange for the miniature, on the understanding that when she was grown up and had money, she should return the portrait *set with diamonds!* So, praying to Minerva, her chosen goddess of the moment, she set off to the barracks; but there, alas! her presence of mind deserted her, and in a few moments she found herself outside again, having presented the needle-case and said nothing whatever about the picture. 'On the whole,' she sums up, 'my first love wasn't the smart piece of work to have been predicted of such a smart little girl, a girl so renowned for her eyelashes, her Latin and her wit.'

We can believe, indeed, that all these fragmentary records are 'epitomes' of later life, for they all match quite credibly with the picture that we get of her when the series of Jane's own published letters begins. This is in the autumn of 1819, she

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is eighteen, and for the moment she is prostrated with grief at the sudden death of her father. Writing to her friend Bess Stodart in Edinburgh, she declares that she has no wish to live 'except for two purposes—to be a comfort to my poor Mother, and to make myself worthy of being united to my adored Father.' There are two heart-broken little notes in the same style, but the third (written probably in the spring of 1820), though it starts in the same vein, changes before the end:

> I daresay you are a little anxious to know the state of my *affairs* at present. I must defer all communications till we meet, which I think will be in summer; and indeed you have not much to learn. My *sentiments* and *views* are very much changed, and I believe in time I shall be ***really sensible***.

She describes herself at Haddington as 'at the bottom of the pit of dulness, hemmed in all round, straining my eyeballs and stretching my neck to no purpose. It is the dimmest, deadest spot (I verily believe) in the Creator's universe'; and indeed it must have been pretty dull for a quick-witted, high-spirited girl. It was from her father that she

had drawn all the intellectual stimulus in her life. Her mother was a beauty, but her mind seems to have been about as provocative as a sofa cushion. She was happy to spend her life in housekeeping, in making a small income go a long way, in paying calls, in giving tea-parties in a drawing-room full of 'a superfluity of elegant whimwhams,' and in trying to find a suitable husband for Jane. This last interest was really the only one she and Jane had in common. Jane had less beauty than her mother, no interest in domestic matters such as marmalade-making or sick hens, and no taste for the elegant stupidities of small-town social life. She duly attended tea-parties, played the piano, sang *The Last Rose of Summer* and *The Warrior's Rest*, and accepted (though ungraciously enough) the relatives who made a convenience of her mother's house for the holidays, and the holiday visits to relatives, which her mother paid in the same spirit. But her eye for humbug was much too clear and her tongue much too sharp for provincial popularity. Though she had much of Elizabeth Bennet's wit and shrewd sanity of mind, she

had not, one imagines, that 'mixture of sweetness and archness' which made it impossible for Elizabeth to 'affront' anybody. We can believe it when we are told that she was not much liked in general Haddington society. With men, however, she was always popular, and though she finds the very air she breathes 'impregnated with stupidity,' she always had the solace of successful flirtation. Bess Stodart is her confidante, and in March, 1821, the chief news is that one 'goosish' lover has just proposed again.

> He presumed to flatter himself . . . that *I might possibly change my mind!* Ass! I change my mind indeed! and for him! Upon my word, to be as imbecile as he is, he has a monstrous stock of modest assurance! However, I very speedily relieved him of any doubts which he might have upon the matter.

But there is another lover, George Rennie (nephew of the architect of Waterloo Bridge), with whom she is having a more serious affair, and within the next few months she was to meet the man through whom she was to be transformed from a vivacious, sharp, romantic young girl like

EARLIEST LIKENESS OF JANE BAILLIE WELSH

From *Carlyle to the French Revolution*, with the permission of the author, D. A. Wilson, and the publisher, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

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many another, to one of the most individual and interesting women of her day.

II

Bess Stodart hears about it *via* a discussion of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. 'Do read this book,' urges Jane, and she goes on to declare that though some of the scenes are 'culpably indelicate,' she has found the whole effect so morally bracing, that at the finish she believes 'if the Devil himself had waited upon me in the shape of Lord Byron, I would have desired Betty to show him out.' Moreover, although she does not wish to countenance such irregularities as Julie's among her female acquaintance, still, she infinitely prefers her to 'the chastest, coldest prude between John o' Groat's House and Land's End.' The book has had the sad effect, however, of convincing her that she will never marry, as she will never meet either a Wolmar or a St. Preux; so she has decided instead to exalt virginity in a novel all about a heroine who is a Beauty and a Wit and the Empress of a thousand *male* hearts, but who

shall live a maid, and die in 'an elegant little garret.' She goes on:

> I have just had a letter from Thomas Carlyle. He is something like St. Preux. . . . He has his talents, his vast and cultivated mind, his vivid imagination, his independence of soul and his high-souled principles of honour. But then—ah, these buts!—St. Preux never kicked the fire-irons, nor made puddings in his teacup. Want of Elegance! Want of Elegance, Rousseau says, is a defect which no woman can overlook.

This was probably written in July, 1821, and the original meeting had been in May. Carlyle was then twenty-five, living in Edinburgh, half-heartedly studying law, whole-heartedly studying Goethe, and doing literary hackwork for a living. He was restless, dissatisfied, and distrustful of himself, tortured physically by chronic indigestion and spiritually by the consciousness of powers within himself still undiscovered and of faculties unexercised. His parents had dreamed of him in the ministry, but he had very early killed those hopes. His omnivorous reading (Gibbon, Voltaire, Newton, Pascal, Hume, Adam

Smith, La Rochefoucauld, Rousseau, and every poet and novelist from Shakespeare and Cervantes to Byron and Mme. de Staël) had seen to it that his mind could not confine itself to the tenets of Presbyterian dogma. Then he had tried teaching, and with no better success. The lack of intellectual stimulus, the undefined social standing, the petty drudgery of schoolmastering, made him as miserable as it must have made Samuel Johnson before him: 'Teaching school is but another name for sure and not very slow destruction,' he writes to a friend. But studying law at Edinburgh University proved little more satisfying. 'Law is a shapeless mass of absurdity and chicane,' he exclaims, while he finds himself 'disgusted with the most feeble drivelling of the students—shocked by the unphilosophic spirit of the professors.' Depressed, too, as all country-bred folk must always be, by the sheer filth and pollution of town life, 'the accursed, stinking, reeky mass' of that 'old black harlot of a city.' Added to his sense of failure was the misery of his bad health, the ache of an unsuccessful love affair during his schoolmastering days,

and the irksomeness of the dull translations and encyclopaedia articles with which he (again like Johnson) earned his living. His prospects were, as he describes them, 'a shadowy void'; he felt his best days 'hurrying darkly and uselessly away'; he knew himself to be moody, proud, intolerant, and stubborn before 'the actual vulgar narrow stupid world of realities'; full of discontent and ferocity, and an aching loneliness. But though in one letter to his mother he declares, 'I am not a genius, but a rather sharp youth, discontented and partly mismanaged, ready to work at aught but teaching,' he had fitful gleams when he felt himself greater than he knew. German literature had first revealed that new heaven and new earth to him, and the flame it lit, though wavering, was unquenchable. He writes early in 1821:

> I have tried about twenty plans this winter in the way of authorship: they have all failed: I have about twenty more to try. . . . I will make the doors of human society fly open before me yet, notwithstanding my petards will not burst or make only *noise* when they do. I must mix them better, plant them more judiciously; they *shall* burst, and do execution too.

And again:

> I know there is within me something *different* from the vulgar herd of mortals; I think it is something *superior;* and if once I had overpassed those bogs and brakes and quagmires, that lie between me and the free arena, I shall make some fellows stand to the right and left—or I mistake me greatly.

At the end of May, 1821, Edward Irving, who had been a school friend and later a fellow-misfit with Carlyle as a schoolmaster at Kirkaldy, proposed that Carlyle should join him for a week-end expedition to Haddington, where Irving was to preach. Irving already knew Haddington. He had gone there as a schoolmaster when Jane was ten years old and had been her Latin tutor during the eighteen months of his stay. Very soon after his move to Kirkaldy he became engaged to the daughter of the minister there, and it does not appear that he saw Jane again until 1818, when he met her in Edinburgh. That they had something of a romance then seems evident, though the details of it are unknown, and commentators vary in their opinion of its seriousness. Irving was

twenty-six, tall, handsome, enthusiastic, just discovering that easy eloquence and that personal magnetism which were to make his success so meteoric; Jane was seventeen. It is not difficult to believe that they would both willingly have forgotten the existence of Miss Martin of Kirkaldy; not difficult to see them falling in love, confessing it, voting romantically for renunciation and honour, and that Irving should keep faith with the minister's daughter. Passion lasts longer at twenty-six than at seventeen, and perhaps the psychoanalysts would attribute a good deal of Irving's religious extravagance and emotionalism to his stern suppression of his feelings at this time; but it seems more than probable that Jane was quite heart-free again within a year. Irving went to Glasgow in the autumn of 1819, and quite apart from the fact that her father's death blotted out all other emotion at that time, the tone in which she speaks of her 'affairs' to Bess Stodart in the following spring does not sound like that of a young girl with a secret sorrow of that sort clouding her existence. By the time that Irving brought

Carlyle to call on her mother and herself, she was deep in another flirtation, and had no room for sentimental feelings toward either of them. It was the chance of mental stimulus which attracted her to Carlyle; it was her starved intellectual and artistic curiosity which he satisfied. *His* feelings, however, were much less restricted, and she became once and for all the woman he loved. His digestion was more than ordinarily rebellious during the visit, but he was 'happy as a lark in May.' 'I came back so full of joy that I have done nothing since but dream of it,' he writes to his brother. He has set down elsewhere [1] what she was in his eyes when he met her:

> Think of a slender delicate creature . . . elegant and airy in her movements as a fawn; black hair and eyes—jet black; her face meanwhile as pure and fair as lilies—and then for her expression—how shall I describe it? Nothing so changeful, nothing so lovely in all its changes; one moment it was sprightly gaiety, quick arch humour, sharp wrath, the most contemptuous indifference—then all at once there would spread over it a celestial gleam of warm affection, deep enthusiasm;—

[1] In a short story called 'Cruthers and Jonson,' published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1831.

every feature beamed with tenderness and love, her eyes and looks would have melted a heart of stone; but ere you had time to worship them—poh! she was off into some other hemisphere—laughing at you—teasing you—again seeming to flit round the whole universe of human feeling, and to sport with every part of it. Oh! never was there such another beautiful, cruel, affectionate, wicked, adorable, capricious little gipsy sent into this world for the delight and the vexation of mortal man.

Carlyle's first letter to Jane is written a few days after his return to Edinburgh. It had evidently been arranged between them that he was to recommend reading for her at once, and he dispatches a copy of Milton and some Mme. de Staël, and suggests that he may bring over a German grammar in person. 'Positively, I must see you soon, or I shall get into a very absurd state.' He begs for a few lines from her when she returns the books, and closes with the familiar symptom that he feels as if he had known her for twenty years! Jane, ignoring the plea for a letter, returns the books 'To Mr. Carslile, with Miss Welsh's compliments and very best thanks.' Carlyle's next letter describes vividly further familiar

symptoms—those of disappointment at finding no reply from her; the 'hysterical' speed of his opening of the parcel, his turning over and shaking of the volumes, his sense of eclipse when he finds the scrap of paper. . . . 'I had a hundred thousand things to tell you . . . but those *compliments* have put the whole to flight almost entirely.' But he remains her 'affectionate friend.' Jane counters with a demure little note signed 'Yours truly' and again calls him Mr. Carslile; which brings a humble entreaty that his name may be spelt correctly, and yet another familiar symptom. 'If you were merely a very accomplished young lady, I would write to you differently . . . as it is, I somehow think you *understand* me . . .' and by September 1 he is explaining his views of the meaning of life, and planning that they shall read Schiller and Goethe together. They did meet, and the letter to Bess Stodart already quoted tells of her interest in him, but it tells also of her sentimental absorption in George Rennie, who has wounded her vanity by apparently escaping from her toils. 'Oh, the devil take him! he has wasted

all the affections of my poor heart.' A further difficulty arose when Mrs. Welsh, who at first had shown Carlyle great kindness, realized that his feelings for her daughter were far more than Platonic and tutorial, and objected to the correspondence. By the end of 1821, Jane is writing, in a very moral tone, that she cannot deceive her mother and carry on a clandestine correspondence, and her next letter is more explicit still:

> Now, Sir, once for all, I beg you to understand that I dislike as much as my Mother disapproves your somewhat too ardent expressions of friendship towards me; and that if you cannot write to me as to a man who feels a deep interest in your welfare, who admires your talents, respects your virtues, and for the sake of these has often—perhaps too often—overlooked your faults: if you cannot write to me as if—as if you were married, you need never waste ink or paper on me more. . . . Falling in love and marrying like other Misses is quite out of the question. I have too little romance in my disposition ever to be in love with you or any other man; and too much ever to marry without love.

This snub does not seem to have upset Carlyle as much as one would have expected. He says he

is content to have his vanity humbled, since she wishes it so; and very rashly, in February, in spite of her requests to the contrary, he went over to see her in person. It was a disastrous visit. Jane's thoughts were engrossed in how to get back the lover she had lost, and she had no affection to spare for so obviously 'safe' an admirer as Carlyle. In spite of her priggish disclaimers, she fancied herself very much in love, and while she is taking with Carlyle this high and mighty tone of complete detachment from romantic weaknesses, she is writing to Bess Stodart describing her agonies of humiliation at Rennie's faithlessness. When she parts from him before he goes to Italy, she feels suffocated with her emotion:

> I scarcely heard a word he said, my own heart beat so loud. . . . Great God, he left the very room where—no matter—as if he had never been in it in his life before—unfeeling wretch!

Carlyle reaped the results of her sore heart and hurt vanity, and we can guess from her letter to Bess at least one of the ways in which she worked off her emotional irritation on that unlucky visit.

She stung him unmercifully about his 'want of elegance.'

Mr. Carlyle was here with us two days. . . . He scratched the fender dreadfully. I must have a pair of carpet shoes and handcuffs prepared for him the next time. His tongue only should be left at liberty: his other members are most fantastically awkward.

She is obviously expecting their friendship to continue in spite of her unkindness; but Carlyle, quite ignorant of course of the real reason of her perversity, shows in his letter written on his return to Edinburgh that her behaviour has really upset him badly:

After that unfortunate visit, it seems as if our connection depended on a single hair; and I tremble lest some unguarded word may dissolve it forever. Surely if you knew into what a state of helpless agitation your anger reduces me, you would reserve the infliction of that severe chastisement for graver crimes—for offences against you not of form, but of deed. . . . I beg earnestly for one sentence from you, somewhat in the shape of encouragement. I am a perfect wreck at present and know not what to do or think. . . . Forget the roughness of my exterior if you think me sound

within. . . . The Graces cannot live under a sky so gloomy and tempestuous as mine: I lament their absence, since you lament it, but there is no remedy.

Her reply is lost, but it was evidently in the style of 'elegant mockery' which always made Carlyle miserable, and he wrote again a fortnight later in great distress of spirit. Jane does not seem to have answered, and her letter of March 3 to Bess Stodart is still full of George Rennie—although she can now laugh at herself for her feeling about him!

What dreadful weather this is! The very elements seem to have leagued with *that wretch* against me; for it is impossible to hear such winds and not to *think* of him. God grant he may not be drowned! . . . Were he dead, you know I should forget his *faults*, and that—that would be dreadful.

And she adds the news that 'Mr. Irving is making a horrible noise in London, where he has got a church.'

Carlyle meanwhile writes on March 23 to sympathize with a friend who has been jilted, and suggests that perhaps he is best out of it, since his

lady seems to have been what he calls 'a person of genius,' i.e. temperament:

These women of genius, sir, are the very devil, when you take them on a wrong tack. I know very well that I myself—if ever I marry—am to have one of them for my helpmate; and I expect nothing but that our life will be the most turbulent, incongruous thing on earth—a mixture of honey and wormwood, the sweetest and the bitterest—or as it were, the clearest sunshiny weather in nature, then whirlwinds and sleet and frost; the thunder and lightning and furious storms all mingled together into the same season—and the sunshine always in the *smallest* quantity! Judge how you would have relished this: and sing with a cheerful heart. *E'en let the bonny lass gang!*

There is silence between Carlyle and *his* bonny lass until April 19, when he sends some books with a formal note. On the 27th, Jane writes:

From a sheet of paper pretending to be a letter that came to me some days ago, I learnt to my great surprise that the wrecked Mr. Carlyle has been restored in mind and body to his lamenting friends.

The letter is signed 'Yours with humility.'

III

The reconciliation was complete, and Jane set herself to forget the wounds which George Rennie had given her pride and her affections, by plunging into a course of study with Carlyle as tutor. With her usual impulsiveness, she wishes 'to study everything, and to write poems, novels, tragedies, essays, etc., etc., etc.'; and though Irving considers that her new interest in Rousseau and the German romantics is giving her a rebellious spirit, which suits ill with *his* conception of female character and a female's station in society, Carlyle sees no reason why she should not rival Mme. de Staël as a novelist or Coleridge as a translator. As a beginning to her training for a literary career, he suggests that she shall write a sonnet on every exalted character she falls in with, an essay on every striking national change, and a tragic drama on the theme of Boadicea. The creative programme, however, dwindles to an exchange of verses once a fortnight, and it is much the same with the course of reading. History is to be the

solid fare (Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Bossuet, 'and a host of others'), geography, chronology, with 'light reading' in Pope, Swift, and Dryden. He suggests four hours a day, and in the first rush of enthusiasm she decides on eight; reduces her time for dressing to ten minutes by cutting her hair a new way and sewing her waists to her skirts; refuses all invitations; reads the life of Socrates; is 'seized with a sudden desire to become a philosopher'; and then sets to work on the thirteen volumes of Rollin's *Ancient History*. Very soon, though, even Carlyle himself is bound to confess that he notices she combines zeal and talents with a lack of 'the humble but indispensable quality of regularity.' She confesses sadly, 'I am a very shuttlecock of a creature: I have no stamina.' Her studies seem to shrink to a fairly regular reading of French and German. She weeps happily over *Corinne* and *Wallenstein*, is shocked by Boccaccio, and spends most of her time still going to the eternal tea-parties, singing Italian airs and sentimental ballads, drawing a portrait of Mrs. Siddons 'with an incurable squint,' and another of Beli-

sarius, 'whose beard *would* look like feathers,' trimming hats, playing chess and shuttlecock with Dr. Fyffe (now her most serious admirer), and flirting with any other young man who happens to be available. Her literary and creative talents she uses mainly to dramatize herself in numerous poses in her letters to Carlyle; as the patroness of genius among the poor of Haddington, as the harried daughter, as the future literary lady, or as a kind of spinster Penelope among a host of eligible suitors.

As for Carlyle (now tutor to the two Buller boys), in spite of the fact that Mrs. Buller 'has the secret of spending seven or eight thousand a year with a *minimum* of comfort, more completely than ever lady I ever saw,' in spite of being 'drowned in drugs' and in wretched health, in spite of his torturing consciousness of his lack of achievement, in spite of moods when he feels 'a miserable pithless ninny'—he is happy if all is well between them:

> Your letters have a power at once to gratify and to excite me which almost nothing else has: there is always

some sharp fillip for my vanities, and some voice to awaken and direct my exertions.

By December, 1822, he has an idea that they might write a novel together in the form of letters, she taking the part of the heroine and he of the hero. The hero is to be a man in the middle ranks of life, gifted with good talents and a fervid enthusiastic turn of mind . . . but tired out . . . with the impediments of a world much too prosaic for him. He had in fact met with nothing and nobody worthy of his whole-hearted admiration, and he was very wretched . . . when suddenly he meets the heroine. . . . The earth again grows green beneath the hero's feet . . . he wins her love . . . but unfortunately Fate interferes in some way with their romance, and they both die heart-broken. . . . The scheme did not develop, and another span of profitless waiting had to be lived through. Carlyle had moods of frantic consciousness of his thwarted creative genius:

There are things tossing up and down this wretched soul of mine that *must* finally drive me mad, or kill me, or come out of me in some shape. . . . It is with me

as if I were enveloped in the rushing of a mighty whirlwind that is dashing me onward to regions of unknown wildness and danger.

With all the weight of such momentous problems in his life, he cannot understand why Jane should be so restless. She is impatient at her lack of literary ability, fretting at her mother's vagaries, irritated at her commonplace companionship, miserable on dull visits to relations . . . suffering, truth to tell, from too much leisure and a desire to have everything every way at once. She wants to marry well, she wants to have Carlyle as a devoted friend, she wants to keep Dr. Fyffe as an admiring companion for chess and shuttlecock, she wants Carlyle to succeed, she wants to shine as a literary light herself too. . . . Carlyle loyally puts her distresses down to 'that sickness of noble hearts . . . which is apt to arise from too exclusive a pursuit of things high and spiritual, and too great an isolation from the every-day interests and enjoyments of life,' but he cannot refrain from asking:

What is to hinder you to read your books and write your essays and talk with your Mother and visit the good people round you and have me for your tutor and absolute servant, and live in the enjoyment of all simple blessings?

What, indeed, except the restless egotism of youth and that 'genius' which Carlyle had early seen to be at once her curse and her charm! He is helpless before it, and though his health gets worse and his prospects vaguer, she becomes more and more the central fact in his shifting and uncertain fate.

The only thing I know is that you are the most delightful, enthusiastic, contemptuous, affectionate, sarcastic, capricious, warm-hearted, lofty-minded, half-devil, half-angel of a woman that ever ruled over the heart of a man; that I will love you, must love you, whatever may betide, till the last moment of my existence.

Jane, however, takes fright (or pretends to take fright) at this frank ardour and replies that her love for him is purely sisterly, though all the best feelings of her nature are concerned in it.

Were I married to another I would love you the same. And is this sentiment, so calm, so delightful, but so

unimpassioned, enough to recompense the freedom of my heart, enough to reconcile me to the existence of a married woman, the hopes and wishes and ambitions of which are all so different from mine, the cares and occupations of which are my disgust! Oh, no! Your Friend I will be, your truest, most devoted Friend . . . but your Wife! Never, never! not though you were as rich as Croesus, as honoured and as renowned as you yet shall be.

Carlyle takes this repudiation of his enthusiasm with admirable good sense and assures her that though he loves her 'in all possible senses of the word,' he is not going to think of the possibility of marriage. Nor must she imagine that his heart is broken.

For the rest, do not fear the consequences as far as I am concerned. My heart is too old, and made of sterner stuff than to break at junctures of this kind. . . . I have no idea of dying in the Arcadian shepherd style, for the disappointment of hopes which I never seriously entertained.

In fact, one cannot but suspect that he took the blow a little *too* calmly for her satisfaction, for in her reply she sets a note of impassioned emotion

by choosing to imagine her misery if he were to die and she had lost his friendship.

> Great God, how wretched, how ruined I should be! But you shall live to be my Guardian Angel—it cannot be the will of the merciful God that I should return to the dreary existence which I endured before we met—it cannot be his Will that a soul born to enlighten the Earth, to be the Daystar of the ages, should be obscured by the shadows of death ere a world has perceived its splendour. You shall live to love me while I live, and to mourn for me when I die.

Carlyle's reply contained what must have been some very acceptable flattery:

> It appears to me that I have found in you what all enthusiasts long for, another and a nobler self: in looking at your character I seem to behold the image of my own beautified in all its lineaments, transfigured, invested with a thousand charms.

IV

For the moment, however, she had no need of these tonic compliments, for on October 14, 1823, she writes in ecstasies over a new excitement which has thrown her into a turmoil of delight. Irving

has visited Haddington on his way to Kirkaldy to be married, and has invited herself and Carlyle to come and spend three months with him and his wife in London! She is almost beside herself at such a prospect, but needless to say, when Irving has visited Carlyle and put the same scheme before him, Carlyle's good sense at once sees the weaknesses of the plan as far as he is concerned. He writes sanely and soberly pointing them out to Jane: the undignified position it would put him in to be living for so long at Irving's expense; Irving's extravagant optimism about London opportunities—'he seemed to think that if set down in London streets some strange development of genius would take place in me'—and his distrust of the effect of Irving's popularity on his character—'dwindling from a true and manly figure into something far too like a canting preacher.' He is enthusiastic that Jane should go, but as it turned out, Irving's wife, perhaps rather naturally, did not second the suggestion. All through that winter and spring Jane hoped that the prom-

ised invitation would arrive, but nothing came except lame excuses and postponements, coloured unmistakably with what she calls Female Influence; so that when, in the following June, Carlyle went to London with the Bullers, she had to stay behind in Haddington.

London gave Carlyle no more than he had expected. He made some agreeable acquaintance, but the literary world then, as later, seemed to him mainly humbug. 'Coleridge,' he reports, 'is a steam-engine of a hundred horses power, with the boiler burst,' and we can imagine Carlyle, with his terrific moral earnestness, trying to 'get something' from Coleridge 'about Kant and Co., about Reason versus Understanding and the like,' while Coleridge hobbled about, saying precisely nothing at all with an infinity of solemn emphasis. Irving is 'deep in Prophecy and other aberrations,' swaying hysterical audiences at his new chapel in Regent Square with talk of 'the gift of tongues' and spending a great deal of time dry-nursing that 'little pepper-pot of a creature, his first-born.' And although Carlyle is grateful to

Mrs. Basil Montague for her kindness, though he praises her warmly to Jane and is obviously flattered by her interest in him, in his heart he finds her superficial and pretentious, her husband 'much a bore and considerably a humbug,' Campbell artificial, and Procter 'altogether small.'

After he had been in London a few months, Carlyle felt acutely that he could not work there, was more than ever convinced that only through his own untiring perseverance and stubborn effort could he find himself, and definitely decided that he was going to seek health and freedom to write in the Scots countryside. This decision proved the turning-point in his relationship with Jane. Just as he had come to it, she wrote that her farm of Craigenputtock was to let, and Carlyle immediately replied (January, 1825) by a suggestion that he should take it, and that they should marry and go there together. He feels that, for him, such a life would bring health and strength and peace of mind.

'You too, my Darling, are unhappy; and I see the reason. You have a deep, earnest, vehement spirit, and

no earnest task has been assigned to it. You despise and ridicule the meanness of the things about you; to the things you honour you can only pay a fervent adoration, which issues in no particular effect.

And with a very touching tenderness and dignity he says how he longs to see her in a home of her own, using her practical abilities and her intelligence as they should be used. This proposal led to an exchange of some of the very frankest love-letters which can ever have been written. Jane, for all her real emotional sincerity, was an egotist; she had a strain of the very shrewdest practical sense, and she was influenced by a mother who disliked Carlyle. Her reply is devastating in its outspokenness:

I love you . . . but I am not *in love* with you; that is to say, my love for you is not a passion which overclouds my judgment and absorbs all my regard for myself and others. It is a simple, honest, serene affection made up of admiration and sympathy.

But although she thinks that such emotion is, perhaps, better to found domestic happiness on than any other, and though she agrees that in sympa-

thetic companionship they might both gain greatly by marriage, it seems to her to involve 'numberless cares and difficulties' and to expose *her* to 'petty tribulations' which she lacks 'the fortitude to despise.'

> Let me ask you, have you any *certain* livelihood to maintain me in the manner I have been used to live in? Any *fixed* place in the rank of society I have been born and bred in? No! . . . as yet you have *not* attained them.

So she demands a settled income and the relinquishing of the—to her—'fool' project of farming 'the most barren spot in Dumfriesshire' ('I would not spend a month there with an angel').

Could anything be more shatteringly practical? Carlyle, rather naturally, finds a difficulty in answering her.

> It were easy for me to plant myself upon the pinnacle of my own poor selfishness and utter a number of things proceeding from a very vulgar sort of pride; it were easy also to pour out over the affair a copious effusion of sentimental cant; but to express in simplicity the convictions of a man *wishing* at least with his whole heart to act as becomes him, is not easy.

He thanks her for her candour, and the good sense and sincerity which prompted it, but claims that she does not understand his position or his hopes. These are, that he feels his life at present to be absolutely negative, but that when he thinks of changing it, he finds, on his side, that his affection for her is intertwined in every part of it: hence the necessity for him to know her position as well. Now he realizes that her love for him is of a different quality, 'subordinate to other principles of duty and expediency,' that her happiness is not by any means irretrievably bound up with his. And while he understands her point of view toward a 'good match,' he does not think that when she glibly counsels his making an effort toward steady employment she can realize what his health is; that the last seven years have been 'incessant torture'; that he knows he must not and cannot continue his present life, but that he believes profoundly that if he could work in healthy surroundings and companioned by her, he could produce something. In her reply, written, one suspects, without suggestions from her mother, Jane

reiterates her lack of passionate feeling, 'my affections are in a state of perfect tranquillity,' but adds that her chief reason for counselling delay is that she believes herself capable of far more than this, and that time will give her feelings opportunity for developing:

> According as my mind enlarges and my heart improves, I become more capable of comprehending the goodness and greatness which are in you and my affection for you increases.

V

When Carlyle came north in April and they met, it is evident they pledged their mutual love finally to each other. She must have told him, too, the truth about the financial side of the matter. Miss Welsh was popularly supposed to be an heiress, and it seems clear that when Carlyle had proposed the Craigenputtock scheme, the idea in his mind had been that they should start life there on his savings, the house and estate being *her* contribution to their joint establishment. The facts, however, were that the rent from Craigenputtock

(about £200) provided the entire income on which Mrs. Welsh and Jane lived, and that it was only Mrs. Welsh's excellent management which had prompted the widespread impression that they were more than comfortably off. This income was legally Jane's, so that her marriage on the terms proposed by Carlyle would leave her mother literally penniless. Carlyle's first action on having this explained to him was to ask Jane to have all her claims legally transferred to her mother for life, and in July she writes to him, 'My money matters are all arranged; and now I am as poor as yourself.' Their future certainly did not look very rosy. Carlyle had taken a farmhouse near his family, where he worked solidly at his *German Romance*, and lived as healthy and hard a life as he could; while she, her freedom to flirt gone, sat down in Haddington as his affianced wife to an indefinite period of waiting. Their faith in each other was their whole stock of hope.

We are both honest creatures and love each other honestly [writes Carlyle]: it is strange if our combined understanding faithfully and disinterestedly applied to

our concerns, will not direct us safely through their intricacies.

This is perhaps the place formally to reply to Froude's ridiculous picture of the frame of mind in which both of them entered into this period of preparation for marriage. He paints Jane, her heart still aching for Edward Irving, deliberately deciding to marry Carlyle as a 'second best,' and 'relinquishing her station in society' to mate with a man of lower birth and breeding than herself, whom she did not really love. Carlyle, meanwhile, though 'he was in love so far as he understood what love meant,' was not capable of understanding a marriage of true minds: 'He thought of a wife as a companion to himself who would make life easier and brighter to him. This was all.'

That Froude could write this dishonest nonsense with the love-letters before him seems almost unbelievable. There, in the actual words which they both wrote, we can see two of the most loyal-hearted true-lovers who ever kept faith. It is true that as a preparation for marriage Carlyle's

overwhelming sincerity suggests 'we must gradually introduce the custom of lecturing one another on our faults'—but cheerfulness comes breaking in on the 'dyspeptical Philosopher,' as she calls him, when he confesses 'my own private view is that you are a *witch*,' and what woman could ask more than the sturdy devotion which says, 'I know you have some hundreds of faults; yet with the whole of them some ten times told, thou art worth any twenty women in the world'; the deep, rich affection which assures her, 'O my Beloved, you are forever dear to me, betide us what may! I could write volumes, and this, as always, would be the meaning of them'; and the sudden, simple, dear words, 'God bless you, Jane.' To every difficulty and vexation he presents the same unwavering solidity of faith and feeling; cheering her with stories of Johnson and Hooker and Milton winning through against odds of health and fortune; meeting her moods and 'scenes' with tender patience and understanding; steady always in the absolute conviction that as

long as they are 'alive and loving one another' they will inevitably win to final happiness.

It was no mere empty flattery when Jane told Carlyle that the more her own nature developed, the more she saw to love in him. And the more she loves him, the more attractive she becomes. As a young girl, for all her charm and liveliness, she can be irritating enough. She was a spoilt only child, and she must very early have formed the habit of instinctive egotism; she was bright and acquisitive of ideas, and as intolerant as she was intelligent; she had ability, but no application, and spent her time, as she herself says, 'flying from one thing to another, always flattering myself into the hope of succeeding better'; she had a hatred of humbug and false emotion, but little power to distinguish the false from the true—she can coquet with genuine emotion, so that her poor, passionately serious lover could even be glad when she had a headache, since it made her sincere, and pleads against her mockery in an almost pathetic way. 'Be serious: do not laugh at me if you can

help it; there is something in laughter that dries up all the channels of the heart.' But with all this, as she was well aware herself, and as Carlyle divined at once, she had the capacity for the most passionate devotion, a scrupulous dignity, and a staunchness of character and courageous grit which could be trusted to the death. Her inextinguishable faith in his genius never even flickered. Though she always held an attitude of humorous indulgence toward his 'preaching vein' and his habit of becoming 'sublime' and declaiming, in the style of a Minor Prophet, to his own Soul and to her Soul, and in favour of Truth, Poverty, Silence, and Work, and against Literary London, Fools, and the world in general, when the practical matter of the moment was, perhaps, how to find a cheap house in Edinburgh—still, her belief in her 'Mr. Socrates' and his future was rooted solidly as a living tree in her life from the first day of their meeting. Something of her sound judgment on that matter can be seen in her advice to him to refuse easy money for a translation of

Schiller, though they needed the money badly enough for their marriage.

There is no exercise for your finest faculties in turning sentences and choosing words; there is no scope for your genius in transcribing the thoughts and sentiments of another; on the contrary I should be afraid that in imitating so long you might cease to be original; and lastly, the task when done, however well done, will gain you only the praise of a good translator.

It was her innate honesty of mind which forbade her to pretend to more passion than she really felt when she became engaged to him, but once she has accepted him as her lover, she surrenders herself freely and frankly to his influence, and it is clear from the letters that she tells no more than the truth when she declares that her growing love for him has changed her nature:

I know not how your spirit has gained such a mastery over mine in spite of my pride and stubbornness; but so it is. Self-willed as a mule with others, I am tractable and submissive towards you; I hearken to your voice as to a second conscience, hardly less awful to me than that which nature has implanted in my breast. . . .

Sometimes in my serious moods I believe it is a *charm* with which my Good Angel has fortified my heart against evil. Be that as it may, your influence has brought me nothing but good.

She had always been delicious in her half hints of how much she liked him: confessing, when she has not heard from him for three weeks, her real anxiety lest he should be ill—or tired of her!—and adding, 'Were I but certain that all is really well, what a Devil of a rage I would be in with you!'—or asking him to come and make up a quarrel, 'and I will give you a whole dozen of voluntary kisses. . . . Think of this: I assure you I never offered such liberal terms of reconciliation to mortal man before.' But her new depth of feeling gives her a new humility. 'You have loved me, not in blindness of my thousand faults, but in spite of them,' and soon she is as much and as vehemently in love as he. 'Strange as you may think it, young man, I have an affection for thee which it is not in the power of language to express'; 'I love you with all my soul'; 'I am your own Jane, for ever and ever.' And when she de-

scribes her future husband to her aunt, she has no shadow of misgiving in her heart:

> Will you like him? No matter whether you do or not—since I like him in the deepest part of my soul. . . . He possesses all the qualities I deem essential in my husband—a warm true heart to love, a towering intellect to command me, and a spirit of fire to be the guiding star of my life.

But just when Jane was fully convinced of the reality of her own happiness, she suddenly found herself face to face with the most perilous emotional crisis of her life. Her old romance with Edward Irving, which she must have regarded as long dead and done with, was most unexpectedly brought to light again, and in a most unwelcome fashion. Not even Mrs. Ireland, whose standards of the truly womanly were of the utmost delicacy, could really blame Jane for that early indiscretion of hers:

> If she had shown weakness in loving a man whom she knew to be engaged to another, she had at least made amends by helping to decide him to marry that other, and so save his honour from all reproach. What

nobler part could a true woman take? What else can be the result where the man is good and the woman is good and where it *is* love and not a lower feeling which draws them together? No mystery is here that an honourable human heart cannot understand; nothing to blush for, though the angels might weep over it.

But meanwhile, Carlyle himself knew nothing about this cause of tears in Heaven: neither Irving nor Jane had said anything about it. To Carlyle, Irving was the man for whom he felt the warmest and most sincere friendship, and the liveliest gratitude for his help in introducing him to the Bullers and to several magazine editors, but whose religious quackery he cordially disliked. As he wrote in 1823:

I love Irving and am his debtor for many kind feelings and acts. He is one of the best men breathing: but I will not give his vanity one inch of swing in my company: he may get the fashionable women and the multitude of young men whom no one knoweth, to praise and flatter—not I, one iota beyond his genuine merits.

Jane's own mature judgment may be guessed from one remark in a letter of May, 1824: 'What an

idiot I was for ever thinking that man so estimable'; but long before that date it is clear that her mocking rationalism had given her a disgust even stronger than Carlyle's toward his theatrical extravagance. No one, unless determined 'to pour out over the affair a copious effusion of sentimental cant' (as Carlyle would put it), could really suppose that Jane's crisp common sense would allow any early affection she had to continue, in the face of Irving's fanaticism. Carlyle, in fact, remonstrates with her sometimes about the acidity of her comments on his preaching. She had made no secret of Irving's earlier admiration for *her*, and had, indeed, given Carlyle a broad hint of part of what had happened, when she reports the obvious unwillingness of Irving's wife to have her to stay with them in London:

> His Wife I have obliged too deeply to hope for kindness from her! [And again:] The recovery of a faithless lover, I should think, is a benefit for which one woman is not likely to be very grateful to another.

She had, however, kept silence on the subject of her feeling for him, and the past would have been

decently buried, had not Irving himself been indiscreet. He chose Mrs. Basil Montague, of all people, as a confidante, leaving her apparently with the impression (his vanity was capable of most things at that time) that he believed Jane still cared for him. So Mrs. Montague, an incurable romancer, wrote to Carlyle, sending a message to Jane, suggesting that if she only knew it, she and Irving wouldn't be in the least happy together! 'She labours under some delusion, I believe, about your secret history,' says Carlyle, as he passes the message on. . . . 'She tells me your heart is in England, your heart is not here.' Jane replies that she too has heard from Mrs. Montague ('she is so frank and kind and high-souled,' she writes, evidently loyally trying, for Carlyle's sake, to pretend that she likes this impertinent, sentimental busybody), and that she has explained the situation to her: 'She will surely be satisfied *now* that there is no worm of disappointment preying on my damask cheek; for I have told her in luminous English that my heart is *not* in England, but in Annandale!' Even after this,

however, she reports that she had '*two* sheets from Mrs. Montague trying to prove that I knew nothing at all about my own heart! Mercy! how romantic she is!' And there was worse to follow. With almost inconceivable officiousness, Mrs. Montague followed up this letter with another, in which, posing as a deeply experienced married woman and a friend of Carlyle, she urges Jane that it is her imperative duty to confess her old feeling for Irving. She insists that Jane's perfectly natural reticence on the subject is lack of frankness, and that her future happiness depends on a 'confession' of her lapse and of the fact that she has 'concealed and disguised the truth.' Poor Jane, now completely in love with Carlyle, is thoroughly frightened by all this pompous interference. Had her feelings been less involved, we can well imagine her telling Mrs. Montague, with some conciseness, to go to the devil, and describing her intrusion into a stranger's private affairs in much the same pungent language in which she later summed up her mother's jealous meddling—as 'a pack of damned nonsense.' But no one in

love can see things in their just proportions, and accordingly Jane, terrified that her confession may wreck their happiness and deface her image in her lover's soul, nevertheless sends Mrs. Montague's letter to him, with the admission that she did once love Irving passionately. Carlyle is as sane and sensible and loving as he always is, and writes to his 'best Jane' that to talk of forgiveness being necessary for such a thing is not to be thought of. The episode, indeed, brings them closer to each other than before, if possible, for Jane met the wave of self-distrust it roused in Carlyle as to his capacity to make her happy, by an outburst of sweet assurance which could not but convince him of her devotion. 'I am yours, oh, that you knew how wholly yours!'

VI

Their troubles were now practical ones, but they were not easily overcome, and there are misunderstandings and cross-purposes all the way along. A year of life in a farmhouse had convinced Carlyle, for the time, that 'a writing character is

wonderfully out of place in rustic society,' and Jane's first idea (in January, 1826) is that they should prolong the engagement indefinitely, that he should rent a house in Edinburgh, and she and her mother one near it. 'We would walk together every day, and you could come and take tea with us at nights. To *me* it seems as if the kingdom of Heaven were at hand.' Carlyle, however, has a burst of obstinate masculinity at such a proposal—'I shall never get any enjoyment of your company till you are all my own.' He foresees the same round of parties and formal visitors which always made his visits to Haddington purgatorial, and is determined that life is never going to be arranged for *him* with the risk of such abominations.

> The moment I am master of a house, the first use I turn it to will be to slam the door of it in the face of nauseous intrusions of all sorts which it can exclude.

But the dispute raised by his candour is soon over. As Carlyle says, they are beyond disagreements meaning anything serious now: 'We are one heart and soul and if we had twenty thousand such mis-

understandings, they must all come to one result at last.' His suggestion is then that they shall marry and live with *his* family at Scotsbrig. Jane is willing enough to agree, but her mother is determined to prevent it, and uses the time-worn methods of jealous mothers to get her way. Jane and Mrs. Welsh had never been friends. They had 'manifold little collisions,' says Carlyle. They were both egotists, and Mrs. Welsh had a temperament which would be 'in fifteen humours in one evening.' Though Jane declares that her 'whole soul is put most horribly out of tune' by their constant quarrels, she usually makes no pretence about her affections being very much involved. 'I do wish my Mother would give over sulking, and resolve to make the best of what can't be helped,' is her normal tone of comment. But the general softening of her nature which her love for Carlyle brought her laid her open to attack on the emotional side (as we have already seen in the Irving episode), and Mrs. Welsh was evidently not slow to take advantage of it. Jane, therefore, replies to Carlyle's suggestion, that as far as her

own feelings are concerned she would share any house with him and deem herself 'the richest, best-lodged lady in the land,' but that her own happiness cannot be the first consideration. 'Should I do well to go into Paradise myself and leave the Mother who bore me to break her heart?' She points out that to live with Carlyle's family would inevitably exclude Mrs. Welsh from her life, since she and they would be incompatible, and that, cut off from her daughter, the mother would be 'the most desolate woman in the world.' 'O, is it for *me* to make her so . . . who am her only, only child—and her a widow?' So Jane suggests that she and Carlyle should marry and have Mrs. Welsh to live with *them* in Edinburgh. Carlyle's reply can easily be imagined: the text, '*The man should bear rule in the house and not the woman,*' was heavily italicized in it; but, fortunately, by the time his letter came, Mrs. Welsh had already changed her mind and had decided to live at Templand with her father and her invalid sister. So Carlyle, finding his own parents opposed to the Scotsbrig idea, then suggests that they shall

live at Haddington, sharing the house, as Jane and her mother had done, with Dr. Fyffe. This led to another misunderstanding. Jane had never told Carlyle of the prolonged flirtation she had carried on with Dr. Fyffe, and when she had described a certain dramatic scene in which she and one of her suitors had taken part—a scene in which the gentleman had been so beside himself that she had thrown her arms round his neck in an effort to pacify him, which he had taken as 'a sort of tacit consent' to his pretensions, or at least 'encouragement to his hopes'—she had omitted to mention that the suitor was the doctor. She felt, no doubt, that any further 'confession' would be in the nature of an anticlimax, and she dreaded all the inevitable tattle and gossip which the arrival of Carlyle as her husband would cause in the little town. Her flat refusal to consider this suggestion puzzles Carlyle considerably, and he confesses 'an inability to reconcile this very peremptory distaste with your usual good sense, and your deep, entire and most precious love of me. I cannot, with my utmost imagining, discover any rock of offence in

Haddington.' Jane wastes no time in argument, but writes at once to say everything is satisfactorily settled by her mother taking a house for them in Edinburgh, a house with a real flower-garden in front overshadowed by a fair-spreading tree, and windows looking out on the greenest of fields; a house with six rooms and 'more closets than I see the least occasion for—unless you design to be another Blue-beard.'

As the wedding approaches and practical matters are disposed of, a new trouble arises. They both become panic-stricken at the thought of the step they are taking, and write encouraging and exhorting each other more as if they were going to life-imprisonment than marriage. 'O, for God's sake be good, my Darling,' cries Carlyle, 'good and wise . . . I do not mean compliant and affectionate: that you are already; but *wise,* clear-sighted towards *me,* and towards the new sphere of life. . . .' 'O my own Darling,' answers Jane, 'do for Heaven's sake get into a more benignant humour . . . or I see not how I am to go through with it. I turn quite sick at the

thought.' She promises him to make no demonstration that she can possibly help, but declares that a faintness and cold shudder comes over her every time she thinks of that 'odious ceremony.' Carlyle, meanwhile, is trying to drown care by draughts of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, but is inclined to think they are taking the matter too much to heart, since many people have been married before. One favour only he begs for the journey to their new home:

> I shall only stipulate that you let me by the road, as occasion serves, *smoke three cigars*, without criticism or reluctance, as things essential to my perfect contentment! Yet if you object to this article, think not that I will break off the match on that account; but rather like a dutiful Husband, submit to the everlasting ordinances of Providence, and let my Wife have her way.

By a few days before the wedding Jane's sense of humour, too, has returned, and she writes:

> I am going to be really a very meek-tempered Wife. . . . My Aunt tells me she could live for ever with *me* without quarrelling,—I am so reasonable and equal in my humour. There is something to gladden your

heart withal! . . . So you perceive, my good Sir, the fault will be wholly your own, if we do not get on most harmoniously together.

Carlyle's last letter is full of a deep tenderness. 'O my own Jane, I could say much, and what were words to the sea of thoughts that roll thro' my heart,' and as he sends his last blessing as a lover, he ends, 'O my Darling! I will always love thee.'

They were married in her grandfather's house at Templand on Tuesday morning, October 17, 1826, and reached 21 Comly Bank, Edinburgh, at nine o'clock that evening.

MRS. THOMAS CARLYLE

MRS. THOMAS CARLYLE

I

'You will scold me and quarrel with me, and then kiss me into peace,' Carlyle has said to Jane a year before his wedding. Perhaps all the vicissitudes of the courtship had made him determined not to put too high an estimate on his married happiness, and to compute two parts sour to one part sweet, so that the reality came to him with almost a shock of joyous surprise. Jane proves perfection at once. Carlyle tells his mother that she is far better than any other wife. She has all the domestic virtues: she is gleg, orderly, managing, biddable, developing skill as a needlewoman and making him the prettiest waistcoat he has ever possessed; unravelling and adjusting all the burble of settling into the new house. But better still, she is the perfect companion. She has an instinctive knowledge of the philosophy of the heart; she

knows when to be silent and when to be gay, and in his fits of despondency and self-distrust, she looks with such soft cheerfulness into his gloomy countenance, insists with such tender assurance that he is going to write a book which will cause the ears of the world to tingle, that new hope possesses him every time he sees her.

Jane is equally content. She congratulates herself every hour of the day on her good fortune, and though they see plenty of people, and people of the sort which she had always wanted to meet and shine among, she is happiest alone with her husband. They sit and read, or he reads while she works or just sits and looks at him, which she really finds as profitable an employment as any other. At their first separation, all their new-born tenderness bursts out in their letters to each other. Jane dutifully records that she has been busy with an essay on the representation of female character in the Greek poets, and a comparison of Cæsar and Alexander, but though she is a little afraid of being accused of 'French sentimentality,' she cannot refrain from adding lovingly how hard she

finds even a week's separation from him, 'Oh! I think I shall never be satisfied with looking at you and holding you in my arms, and covering you with kisses after this'; while he replies to his own dearest little Goody, on the topic of his affection for her:

> No, I do not love you in the least; only a little *sympathy* and *admiration* and a certain *esteem*, nothing more! O my dear, best, wee woman! But I will not say a word of all this till I whisper it in your ear with my arms round you.

In spite of their perfect mutual satisfaction, however, Edinburgh does not prove congenial to Carlyle's writing. They meet many people, including De Quincey, Jeffrey, and 'Christopher North,' but Carlyle finds in them all the usual lack of earnestness. He writes some critical articles, and at the suggestion of Jeffrey, undertakes the task of 'Germanizing the public' in the *Edinburgh Review*, but after six months of town life, we find them planning to leave, finding the city atmosphere too 'cagelike,' and a year later they moved definitely to Craigenputtock. Jane had said

that she would not spend a month there with an angel, but though she is still humorous about the horrors of its loneliness—pretending to hope anxiously that when Carlyle's sister Jean goes there in advance of them, her garters and everything in the shape of hemp or steel have been removed from her!—she spent the next six years there in real happiness with her husband.

One of Froude's fixed delusions always was that Jane was miserable at Craigenputtock, and that all her later ill health was bred from the hardships she suffered there. It is difficult to know on what possible evidence he bases his conviction of this, but his picture of her there is of a soul and body in Purgatory. To begin with, his taste in scenery must have been much like that of the Elizabethan traveller who summed up the two chief European mountain districts by the remark that the Pyrenees are not so high and hideous as the Alps—and he dismisses those rolling lowland moors as 'the dreariest spot in the British dominions.' No wonder that Jane shuddered at the thought of making her home in so stern a solitude, thinks Froude;

and not only did she have to exist in this desolation, she had to work there like a menial drudge. He pictures her cooking, washing, cleaning, blacking grates, milking cows, taking charge of the dairy and poultry, sewing at the family clothes and mending the family shoes, 'while Carlyle looked on encouragingly with his pipe,' grumbling if things went wrong and giving his wife no credit if all went smoothly.

It was not, certainly, from Jane's letters that Froude got his pathetic description of her hardships. She writes to Bess Stodart, 'Carlyle and I are not playing farmers here, which were a rash and unnatural attempt. My brother-in-law is the farmer and fights his own battles.' She doesn't know how many cows there are, since she takes no delight in cows and has happily no concern with them; she feeds poultry 'at long intervals and merely for form's sake'; she has a servant who is just the cleverest she has ever known, a perfect paragon; and she is in and out all day long, galloping over the country on her mare Larry, delighting in superintending her household, making

and mending, and coping with the practical problems she always loved, 'combining all sorts of exercise and all sorts of tastes in the most rapid alternation.' It is true that it is solitary and that they live 'the stillest of lives.' In the summer evenings when they drive in 'leafy twilight' over to Templand in the gig, they seem alone in the world; in the autumn the sound of Carlyle's besom sweeping up the withered leaves might be heard at a furlong's distance; in the winter, for three months no stranger, not even a beggar, comes to the door, and the only life about besides themselves is the starving hares which at night come around the house, 'so witchlike as they skip and bound across the moonlit snow.' 'Our knocker hangs a useless ornament,' says Jane, but the mere outward figure of her place of abode has become a matter of moonshine to her; the only thing of importance is the quantity of 'heart' in a place, and in that Craigenputtock is supreme. When she is on a visit to her mother at Templand, she is wearying to be back, and hoping that her husband is longing equally for her:

Goody, Goody, dear Goody,—you said you would weary, and I do hope in my heart that you are wearying. It will be so sweet to make it all up to you in kisses when I return. You will *take me* and hear all my bits of experience, and your heart will beat when you find how I have longed to return to you. . . . Darling, dearest, loveliest. . . . I think of you every hour and every moment. I love you and admire you like—like anything!

and again:

I wonder if you sleep at nights, or if you are wandering about—smoking and killing mice. Oh, if I was there I could put my arms so close about your neck and hush you into the softest sleep. Good night. Dream of me. . . .

Even the lack of the society she loves is nothing. 'My husband is as good company as reasonable mortal could desire.' They read Spanish together in the evening; or, when Carlyle has been 'writing with impetuosity' at *Sartor* all day, Jane gives her comments and criticisms on what he has done: 'always beautifully wise,' says Carlyle in the *Reminiscences*, 'and so soft and loving had they even been foolish!'

They spent the winter of 1833 in London, where we have glimpses of Carlyle striding about the London streets carrying the manuscript of *Sartor* from publisher to publisher in vain, and avoiding visits to Irving because 'to go to him, and find the Holy Ghost raging about him like Bedlam is no very inviting journey'; and glimpses of Jane horrified by the London climate and the badness and dearness of food, but making friends and developing that genius for intimate sociability which was her great talent as a hostess. They went back to Craigenputtock with very little accomplished in the business way, but the following spring Carlyle was convinced that he had really had enough of rural solitudes. He says the very sound of his voice has got into a savage-prophetic John-the-Baptist tone, and that he 'must civilize: it is really essential.' They decided to try London again. Not that Carlyle found the literary stimulus of London any more useful to him than he had found it nearly ten years before. He still 'hardly found a man of common sense or common honesty' among contemporary writers, and sums them

ANE WELSH CARLYLE IN THE YEAR OF HER MARRIAGE

Miniature by Kenneth Macleay. 1826.

all up as 'indubitablest duds.' Their triviality appals him, and after being present at a party where Sydney Smith had been 'guffawing' and other wits of the day 'prating and jargoning,' his comment in his notebook is, 'To me through these thin cobwebs Death and Eternity sate glaring.' But though he fails to find a single man who has given him a new idea, he feels that the very view of such a huge phenomenon as London life works deeply into the imagination and must have its fruit; that, with Jane by his side, he *could* sweep all these small literary fry into infinite space and make room for himself to do something better, and that London is now the place for him to sink or swim in. Jane, needless to say, was only too glad of the adventure. She had unbounded faith in his genius and her own good management, and she counselled blithely for the burning of ships and a definite house-moving. In June, 1834, with two hundred pounds to face the world with, they were rattling across London in a hackney coach, with the maid, 'our looser baggage,' and Chico, the canary bird, on the way to 5 Cheyne Row,

Chelsea. Chico burst into song in Belgrave Square, which they regarded as a good omen, and there followed three days of cheerful gipsy life among litter and carpenters, expeditions to the ironmongers to bargain about kettles and pans, unpacking of the barrel of oatmeal and hams and butter from Scotsbrig, and Leigh Hunt sending perpetual kindly, if unpractical, messages from his home in the next street.

They were charmed with their little thirty-five-pound-a-year house and its surroundings. It looked out on a rank of old pollarded limes in front, over green hayfields at the back, and had a garden with a cherry and a walnut tree, where Carlyle could wander about in his dressing-gown and a straw hat, and smoke his pipe in peace. Fifty yards away was the waterfront:

> A broad highway with huge shady trees, boats lying moored, and a smell of shipping and tar. . . . The broad river with white-trousered, white-shirted Cockneys dashing by like arrows in their long canoes of boats; beyond, the green beautiful knolls of Surrey with their villages—on the whole a most artificial, green-

painted, yet lively, fresh, almost opera-looking business.

Finally, Chelsea abounds more than any other place in omnibi. . . .

Jane was equally enthusiastic. We see her happily arranging the house, weaving a home from fragments of Haddington and Comly Bank and Craigenputtock, mixed with 'cockneycalities.' She announces triumphantly that the house has no bugs, which is more than can be said for any of the houses of her acquaintance: and as she paints furniture and sups off porridge and sees the bread her neighbours throw into the ash-bin, she congratulates herself on her superior Scotch 'shiftiness' and thrift. Her dyed puce gown will do for the winter, with her turned pelisse, and she has smartened the whole effect with a bonnet 'with an air,' having a little brown feather nodding over the front and a crown pointed like a sugar-loaf. The entertainment of their friends at tea in the evenings costs only a few pence, and if they go out themselves, dogs and the omnibus save them the expense of a 'neat fly.'

All this was part of the practical, contriving

ability which later gave her the idea of asking the postman to take her dog Nero on his rounds for exercise, and of paying sixpence a week to have him taken with the washing to the laundry and sent back next day, clean and dry; but at this earlier date there was need enough of genuine economy. The literary world had developed a distrust of Carlyle since his experiment with *Sartor*, regarding his opinions as too radical and his style as too turbulent for the polite reading public. Carlyle dismissed the public contemptuously as 'an old woman,' but he writes in his journal in February, 1835:

> It is now three and twenty months since I have earned one penny by the craft of literature. . . . I have been ready to work, I am abler than ever to work, know no fault I have committed; and yet so it stands. To *ask* able editors to employ you will not improve, but worsen matters. You are like a spinster waiting to be married.

He had just finished the first volume of *The French Revolution* after five months of the toughest labour he had ever put into anything, and had

buckled down to the second volume, while the two hundred pounds was getting very near its end, when that crushing catastrophe happened which appals one afresh every time one thinks of it. He had lent the manuscript of the first volume to John Stuart Mill, and one evening, as Jane and Carlyle were sitting together, Mill burst in 'pale as Hector's ghost' with the shattering news that the manuscript was burnt. He had, as a matter of fact, lent the book to his friend Mrs. Taylor, but he took all blame on himself, explaining how it had been left about and had been taken by the maid for waste paper. There is a story that Mrs. Taylor deliberately burnt the manuscript in a fit of jealous pique, because Carlyle, whom she disliked, had written the great book which she felt that Mill, the man she loved, should have written—but the story rests on no evidence and can be quoted only as a piece of contemporary gossip. What the news meant to Carlyle can be imagined. 'It was like *half* sentence of death to us both,' he says, and it was made even worse by their having to pretend to take it lightly, to mitigate Mill's

dismal and ghastly horror, and by the fact that Mill, in his misery, stayed three mortal hours! 'Oh, the burst of sympathy my poor darling then gave me,' says Carlyle, but more important than any burst of sympathy was her sustaining power during the heartbreaking job of rewriting. Through all the darkness of physical and emotional and mental agony which had to be gone through before the whole book was finished, she 'burnt like a steady lamp' beside him, and it was not until the evening of January 12, 1837, that Carlyle put the completed manuscript into her hands and went out for a walk with his work behind him. After the publication of *The French Revolution* Carlyle's reputation was made, and the position of himself and of Jane was entirely changed. Not only were they out of all danger of poverty, of what Carlyle calls 'the bewildering terror of coming to actual want of money,' but he was a literary Lion, and she was a Lion's wife.

II

It is sometimes difficult, as we read the letters of Carlyle and Jane to each other throughout the course of their life together, to understand the tenacity of the myth which represents them as an unhappily married pair—'this highly respectable, yet wofully mismated couple,' as the *New York Herald* called them in a review of Mrs. Ireland's *Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Even as late as the publication of Margot Asquith's autobiography the myth is accepted as an acknowledged fact, and she describes herself saying to Tennyson, 'It seems a pity that they were ever married; with any one but each other, they might have been perfectly happy.' To which Tennyson is alleged to have replied, 'I totally disagree with you. By any other arrangement four people would have been unhappy instead of two.' Froude wrote his biography of Carlyle postulating Jane's domestic tragedy throughout, and confirming his theory from the evidence of the *Reminiscences* and of the *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*. But

Froude put a construction on Carlyle's editing of his wife's letters which is open to a very obvious challenge. He insists on taking it that Carlyle did the work as a form of expiation for his treatment of his wife during her life. Just as Thackeray's sentimental impertinence took Swift's heart-broken comment, 'Only a woman's hair,' for the remorse of a guilty, lonely wretch shuddering over the grave of his victim, so Froude takes Carlyle's 'Oh, that I had you yet for but five minutes to tell you *all*' as the remorse of another guilty, lonely wretch, shuddering under the revelation that he had sacrificed his wife's health and happiness to his work, been blind to his most obvious obligations, and stood self-convicted as negligent, inconsiderate, selfish. Yet is there any true lover, who in the implacable face of Death, has not had all the emotions which Carlyle expresses in his private sketch of his wife written immediately after her death? Just that longing for five minutes to tell everything, just that feeling that he never truly appreciated his happiness, just that anxiety to plead with his fellow mortals to pour

out all they can of their love before it is too late. It is just the common, piteous cry of human loneliness.

> O, that it were possible
> After long grief and pain
> To feel the arms of my true love
> Round me once again.

And as he writes of her in those desolate months, it is very natural that he should feel that the loss of her has been the loss of all that made life valuable, and that as he now looks back on everything he sees it 'through rainbows, the bit of sunshine hers, the tears my own.' The *Reminiscences*, indeed, give very ample proof of Carlyle's passionate grief at his loss, but to use them as evidence of either remorse for a husband's sins, or exact testimony to a wife's perfection, is absurd.

To collect reliable evidence on that topic, we must go to the actual letters written by Carlyle and Jane as they lived their lives, and to the comments of those who lived around them. Here it is obvious at once how baseless is Froude's theory of Carlyle's need of any real repentance and remorse.

Take just a handful of sentences from letters of his to his wife between the time she was thirty-seven and the time she was fifty-seven.

Write, dear Goody, as I bid thee. Forget my biliary temper, remember only the poor heart that does mean truly by thee. And be good to me, thou dear Goody. (1838.)

My dearest, while I live, one soul to trust in shall not be wanting. (1843.)

Good be with thee, dear little Goody mine. "We clamb the hill together" in a very thorny but not paltry way. Now let us sit and look around a little. We shall have "to totter down" also: but "hand in hand we'll go." (1845.)

[Wishing her many birthdays.] I think now and then that I could dispense with all other blessing. . . . I am not to send you any gifts other than this scrap of paper; but I might give you California and not mean more. (1857.)

My poor little Jeannie! my poor, ever-true life partner, hold up thy little heart. We have had a sore life pilgrimage together, much bad road, poor lodging and bad weather, little like what I could have wished and dreamt for my little woman. But we stood to it, too;

and, if it please God, there are yet good years ahead of us. (1858.)

So that Carlyle's devotion never faltered is not hard to prove. And what of Jane? We will take some extracts from her letters, too.

[To her mother-in-law.] I have only him, only him in the whole wide world to love me and take care of me, poor little wretch that I am. Not but what numbers of people love me after their fashion far better than I deserve; but then *his* fashion is so different from all these and seems alone to suit the sort of crotchety creature that I am. (1837.)

[When she suspects that he is going to send her a birthday present.] Write me a longer letter than usual, and leave presents to those whose affection stands more in need of vulgar demonstration than yours does. (1844.)

I have grown to love you, the longer the more, till now you are grown to be the whole Universe, God, everything to me. [From a manuscript letter, written after twenty years of married life, quoted by Alexander Carlyle in *The Love Letters of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh.*]

God bless you, dear. I am in the Devil's own humour

today if you care to know it—but ever yours, *not* without affection. (1845.)

O, my Dear! shall I ever make fun for you again? . . . I want so much to *live*—and to be to you more than I have ever been. . . . Oh, I would like you beside me. I am terribly alone. But I don't want to interrupt your work. (1863.)

[On the success of his Edinburgh address.] What pleases me most in this business—I mean the business of your success—is the hearty personal affection towards you that comes out on all hands. . . . One general, loving, heartfelt throwing up of caps with young and old, male and female. (1866.)

All this cannot but convince the ordinary reader that Carlyle spoke truly when he said that though they both had a thousand faults they both loved each other honestly. Each had the clearest vision of what he or she owed to the other. Jane realized well enough what Carlyle had brought to her life. When she is staying with her Liverpool cousins she writes of how grateful she is to him for rescuing her from the 'young lady sphere,' seeing vividly what her existence might have been if she

had married differently. Carlyle, too, knew what his life might have been without her. Though he speaks in the *Reminiscences* as if she possessed nothing but beauties, which is certainly far from the truth, we cannot doubt from the supplementary evidence of the letters and the report of friends of the radiance which her glowing warmth of personality shed over the little Chelsea house, and how it looked out from that kind, roguish face of hers, with its bright black eyes. The essence of sociability is good talk, and it was for talk that visitors went to Cheyne Row. The Carlyles never gave dinner-parties, and only once what Carlyle describes to his mother as 'a thing called soirée; that is to say a Party of Persons who have little to do except wander through rooms, and hustle and simmer about, all talking to one another as they best can.' Though it went off most successfully, Carlyle smoked a peaceable pipe at midnight, praying that it might be long before they saw the like again; and, indeed, such social insipidities were precisely what most irritated the robust, sociable good sense of both of them: 'Inane

speech, the pretence of saying something when you are really saying *No*thing, but only counterfeits of things, is the beginning and basis of all other inanities whatsoever.' When they talked, they both talked *heartily*, and they made no pretences of other entertainment. As Thackeray said, the door was opened by a snuffy Scotch maid, but the best company in England came ringing at it, eager not for empty elegances and full stomachs, but for intelligent human intercourse. Tea and biscuits were served at seven o'clock, and the company stayed talking as long as it liked.

Accounts of Carlyle's conversational manner vary very widely, though all agree as to its vigour, its brilliance, and the richness and fertility of his mind. Gavan Duffy declares that he never found Carlyle impatient of contradiction; Jeffrey calls him arrogant, vituperative, and obscure; Darwin found him the best worth listening to of any man in England; Herbert Spencer says he did little but launch into tirades against things in general; Goldwin Smith thought his pessimism very monotonous; Henry James dubs him a hardened

declaimer, and FitzGerald reports of one evening 'he lectured on without intermission for three hours . . . and I was very glad to get away.' We are told that he developed a special manner for visiting Americans, because he found that it was what they expected and liked—that is, he at once fixed them with a glittering eye and launched into a hortatory harangue; but though he was perhaps less hortatory in general, he certainly harangued other folk besides Americans. The effort to silence him with a final answer must have been like trying to get the last word with an echo, and the only creature that ever successfully interrupted him was Lady Harriet's parrot. Except Jane, that is, and she was not always successful. Espinasse says she once broke in when her husband was thundering out oral Latter Day Pamphlets at him: 'Don't be angry with Mr. Espinasse; he is not to blame,' which made Carlyle's denunciations change to laughter, and Moncure Conway recalls an occasion when Carlyle was storming about the tendency of the age to spend itself in talk, and Jane put in softly, 'And how about Mr. Carlyle?'

But she was apparently powerless to prevent his spending an entire evening expounding the Schleswig-Holstein question 'from a few hundred years before the beginning of it,' to Mrs. Oliphant, who had to sit there like a passive bucket being pumped into; and Henry James, the father of the novelist, describes an occasion on which her success was certainly only partial. Another visitor was present, and Jane whispered to Henry James that she expected trouble, because this man and Carlyle usually fell, sooner or later, upon the topic of Irish politics and became perfectly frenzied over it. They did, and at last Henry James, who was between Jane and the other visitor, while Carlyle was beyond him, felt her foot crossing his 'to reach the foot of my infuriated neighbour and implore peace.' Peace was achieved, but not with the tact which Jane had intended—

> for the ruffian had no sooner felt the gentle, appealing pressure than he turned from Carlyle to meet her tender appeal with undisguised savagery. "Why don't you," he fiercely screamed—"Why don't you, Mrs. Carlyle,

touch your husband's toe? I am sure he is greatly more to blame than I am."

On which the whole company burst forth into 'uncontrollable glee,' with Carlyle taking the lead.[1]

But the master of the house did not have it all his own way in the conversation at Cheyne Row. 'As soon as that man's tongue stops, that woman's begins,' Jane quotes 'that politely malignant old lady' Samuel Rogers as saying, and she had her own special vein quite as clearly as her husband had his. Satiric narrative was her province, and Gavan Duffy, Geraldine Jewsbury, David Masson, Mrs. Oliphant, and Froude are all unanimous in their opinion of her excellence in it. She could make out of a walk in the streets a whole amusing Odyssey of adventures, observes Mrs. Oliphant; she could tell a story about a broom-handle and make it entertaining, protests Geraldine; she could carve a literary vignette out of the commonest materials, urges Froude; she could make a picturesque and witty story out of

[1] *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1881.

anything whatever, caps Masson. But her favourite topic was the home life of her husband and herself. She would fill his pipe, take a preliminary puff or two herself, pass it on to him, and launch into brilliantly embroidered histories, with Carlyle listening benignantly, 'with the pleased look of a lion whose own lioness was having her turn in the performance.' [2] She would tell of Carlyle's efforts at choosing a maid—of how he interviewed an applicant for the place, and pronounced her a most worthy and honest person; of how she arrived, with the appearance of a most accomplished Sairey Gamp, came leering up to Jane, and after she had eyed her closely from head to foot, remarked, 'When people dies, I can lay 'em out perfect.' [3] She would describe what usually happened when Carlyle came home from a holiday. How for days she would have been slaving to have everything in the house perfect for his arrival; how, when the actual day arrived, she would be up from dawn, putting the finishing touches to the whole perfection of orderliness; how his favourite dinner

[2] D. Masson, *Memories of London in the Forties.*
[3] M. D. Conway, *Thomas Carlyle.*

would be ready, his pipe and tobacco put out, and how then, worn out, but certain at least that nothing was lacking, she would sit down to await him. And finally, how, when he did come, at once after his welcome, he would go restlessly nosing round the room. 'Where's the wedge for this window?' would burst from him, and the whole house would have to be ransacked from cellar to attic until it was found.[4] Or his usual impatience would be illustrated by the story of the maid's comment on his strange behaviour one morning—the story of how he wanted to do an extra amount of washing, and said to the maid who called him, 'I should like tea for breakfast, *but you need not hurry*.' And the maid, not knowing the reason for the remark, came and reported to Jane that she thought he must be dangerously ill: 'It was such an unlikely thing for the master to say, that it quite made her flesh creep!'

The same comradeship of intimate understanding and sympathy which we can feel between them

[4] 'Some Reminiscences of Jane Welsh Carlyle,' *Temple Bar*, October, 1883.

in the atmosphere of their social circle at Cheyne Row linked them equally in their private personal life. One of the pictures of Jane which remained most vividly in Carlyle's mind after her death is that of her morning visits to him at Craigenputtock, when he was shaving. Of how she would sit on a chair behind him and gossip, and of the contrast in the mirror between her bright, cheery face and his own rugged soapy one. They had something of the same thing all through their lives—what she used to call Chelsean Nights' Entertainments, when he lay on the hearthrug and smoked, so that the smoke went up the chimney ('if I were careful,' says Carlyle, describing those scenes), and she lay on her sofa and spun tales of her doings, and gave spiced accounts of the doings of her friends. David Masson bears witness to the happy flow of casual fireside chat which went on when they were alone together in the evenings; Emerson speaks of their 'engaging ways' and the beautiful terms they lived on; and we can feel something of the usual harmonious chiming of their natures in a letter of 1843 where

Carlyle, away in Scotland, speaks of his longing to be back 'at home with Goody and her new house and her old heart,' while Jane in reply tells of her crossness at the inopportune arrival of Dr. John Carlyle to spoil her husband's perfect homecoming, but insists that when he does arrive she is going to take him into a room and lock the door until they have had 'a quiet comfortable talk about Time and Space.' Her affectionate good sense comes out too in her comment on a paper criticizing *Latter Day Pamphlets* which has come during Carlyle's absence. 'Shall I send it? I vote for putting it quietly in the fire *here;* it is ill-natured, of course,—and *dully* so'; or in her humorous encouragement to him about the first pages of *Frederick*—when she solemnly writes that she is the only person she knows who is *always* right, so that when *she* tells him that what he has sent her is the best thing he has ever written, it obviously must be so! Or in her remarks to him about letters: 'If you "feel a stop" (Quakerly speaking) best to let it have way; no good comes of forcing nature, in the matter of

writing or any other matter.' Mr. D. A. Wilson describes a picture which Carlyle gave his wife on her fifty-second birthday—a coloured lithograph of a wife shaving her husband. She holds his nose with her left hand, and while grasping the razor in her right she is leisurely chatting with a caller. Carlyle has inscribed it, 'To my dear Jeannie (14th July, 1853) from her ever-affectionate T. Carlyle (dealer in emblems).' Jane bantered him in the same way, just as before marriage she had replied to his indiscreet praise of another lady, 'I am not a bit jealous of her, not I indeed! Only you may as well never let me hear you mention her name again!' Family jokes flew about at Cheyne Row, just as Jane's letters are full of *coterie-sprache*—strange idioms of Mazzini, solemnities of Irving, platitudes of John, sayings of servants and so on, for which she had a marvellous memory, and which, as Carlyle said, gave such a twinkle of humour to every-day occurrences, shed 'such a lambency of "own fireside" over everything.' There was the same spirit of fellowship in foolery in the childish jokes she

would play on him. In 1849 she put a card-case she was giving him as a birthday present in a used envelope and had it brought in with the post. Neuberg describes the rest of the scene:

"Another letter from Espinasse? I had one from him this morning; and this is his handwriting. What in the world is there in it? H'm, a cardcase! That's good, however, just the thing I wanted. . . . But how in the world did little Espinasse get to know I wanted a card-case?" "It's your birthday too," said the mistress. "Ah, how did he get to know that?" He lay on the sofa while all this took place. After a pause he got up, drew a pocket comb from his pocket, and smoothed his wife's hair with it. "Ah, I know now it is your doing; you told Espinasse to send it." "I declare upon my honour I did no such thing." "It is your doing, however." "I assure you I never wrote a word to Espinasse about it." Etc. . . .

In 1857 Henry Larkin describes another practical joke of hers. One morning when he came downstairs after his work with Carlyle, Jane asked him whether her husband had mentioned a paper he was to speak specially to Larkin about. The secretary said no, but he would go back and inquire

about it. Carlyle could throw no light on what the paper could be, so the men both went downstairs to ask Jane more about this mystery. As they came up to her she handed them a slip of paper with *April 1st* written on it! Tennyson, indeed, made a very shrewd criticism of the truth of the matter in the Carlyle household when he said that no two people who chaffed each other as heartily as Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle could possibly be unhappily mated.

III

But though this picture of a mutual and long-sustained love and trust is, in the long run, the most real and the most important, it is not likely that so well-defined a myth as that of the Carlyle unhappy marriage should not have some well-defined skeleton on which its embroideries have been draped. 'Woe to the house where there is no chiding,' wrote Jane in one of her notebooks, and any curse for that especial lack can certainly never have visited the house in Cheyne Row. Even as early as 1837 we find Jane writing that

a despondent letter of Carlyle's makes her long to have him with her to kiss into something like cheerfulness, but that she realizes that if he *were* with her in that mood, it is as likely as not that *with the best intentions* she would have quarrelled with him rather. And she adds grimly: 'Poor men and poor women! what a time they have in this world, by destiny and their own deserving. But—"tell us something we do not know!"' Carlyle himself knew exactly how difficult his nature made him: 'My life has been shrouded since youthhood, almost since boyhood, in continual gloom. . . . Could I be easy to live with?' he writes in the *Reminiscences*. Even before marriage we find him warning her of his perversities, and how he realizes that his best resolutions about making her happy may make shipwreck in the sea of practice. We find Jeffrey, who wrote equally candid criticisms to Jane, urging her to be patient and gentle, giving Carlyle matrimonial advice quite early in his married life, and exhorting him to be gay and playful and foolish with his wife at least as often as he requires her to be wise and heroic with him.

But Carlyle knew full well how empty such exhortations were to him, and tells his wife the plain truth when she writes hoping that he is going to be cheery:

> My poor Goody, depending on cheerful looks of *mine* for thy cheerfulness! For God's sake do not, or do so as little as possible. How I love thee, what I think of thee, it is not probable that thou or any mortal will know. But cheerful looks, when the heart feels slowly dying in floods of confusion and obstruction, are not the thing I have to give.

When he gets into these moods of what he calls 'sulky despair,' there is nothing for his wife to do except wait until they pass, and in the meantime to endure plans discussed in the style of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, groans as grievous over the condition of his clothes as over the condition of his soul, and ragings and lamentings and all but rending of his garments as he wanders wretchedly about the house in search of physical and spiritual quiet. Henry Larkin, who acted as a kind of unofficial secretary to Carlyle for many years, says [5] that he had finally to give up the

[5] *British Quarterly Review*, July, 1881.

work because of Carlyle's ungovernable irritability and exacting ways; and after Jane's death, Carlyle and his brother John found it impossible to live with each other for more than a few months. Jane had to harden herself to his nature, and tells his mother in 1840: 'Carlyle growls away much in the old style; but one gets to feel a certain indifference to his growling: if one did not, it would be the worse for one'; while the poor growler confesses sadly that in such moods he feels himself to be the most miserable of all men: 'yet knowing well privately that it is *not* so and begging pity and pardon from poor Goody, whom God bless.' Jane must early have found, too, that though she could trust his love and loyalty to the death, the superficial gallantries of masculine behaviour were almost impossible to a man of his nature. After her mother's death, when she was over forty, he gave her a smelling-bottle as a birthday present, and as she describes her pathetic pleasure in his thoughtfulness, she adds her reason for it: 'It was the first thing of the kind he ever gave to me in his life. In great matters he is

always kind and considerate; but these little attentions, which we women attach so much importance to, he was never in the habit of rendering to any one.'

Added to the mental stress of living through his dark moods and his general lack of the graces of human intercourse, there were all the practical difficulties which beset the wife of a man of genius. Jane can often make a comedy out of these trials of a literary man's wife—her suspicions that all her husband's many lady admirers think she doesn't know her luck, her dealings with the applications for autographs, passionate invitations to dine, and announcements of inexpressible longings to drink tea with her; her 'doing' of all the bores, while the interesting people are taken by Carlyle to be smoked and talked with; or the methods she employs to cope with the problems of landlords, tax assessors, demands for jury service, girls playing the piano, dogs howling, cocks crowing, and parrots screaming! There is a tolerant touch in the satire of her picture of Carlyle's nervous demoralization at the prospect of a public dinner,

'lounging about from the mantelpiece to the table—from the table to the chairbacks—touching everything and contradicting everything,' or in that depressing picture of a return home to Cheyne Row after a happy visit to Scotland, during which the house is supposed to have had a complete cleaning.

> Figure this: (Scene—a room where everything is enveloped in dark yellow London fog. For air to breathe, a sort of liquid soot! Breakfast on the table—"adulterated coffee," "adulterated bread," "adulterated cream," and "adulterated water"!) Mr. C. at one end of the table, looking remarkably bilious; Mrs. C. at the other, looking half dead! Mr. C.: "My dear, I have to inform you that my bed is full of bugs, or fleas, or some sort of animals that crawl over me all night."

There is a certain wry humour in the scene of Jane trying to cheer up a domestic meal with a little gossip about a lady who had eloped to France with her lover, and being told by Carlyle that she was making herself 'an advocate of whores'; in the description of Carlyle being so wild to get away when he has finished a volume of *Frederick*

the Great, and so incapable of determining where to go and when to go 'that living beside him has been like living the life of a weathercock in a high wind blowing from all points at once!'; in that 'considerable of a row' which arose from a missing pamphlet, with Carlyle storming about it as 'one of those books seen for a moment—laid out of his hand, and then swept *irrecoverably* into the general chaos of this house,' and Jane's superior little comment: 'It was found of course in his own book-press, the first thing I saw on opening it.' But there is not much humour in many of her descriptions of her practical trials: of Cheyne Row being like a madhouse when Carlyle is in a 'bilious fever'; of the 'climax of irregularity' when Carlyle orders the dinner for four-thirty and keeps it waiting until six o'clock, and goes to bed at two, so that breakfast prolongs itself into midday; or when he keeps his portmanteau half packed for a month while he goes through frantic 'hithering and thithering' trying to decide when he wants to go away, while all her plans wait on his; or when, after a tremendous

house-cleaning, Carlyle comes home, admires all the new arrangements for three days—on the fourth day, the girl next door starts playing the piano, he insists that 'he can neither think nor live' with the rooms as they are, and that they must all be changed round again at once.

> Just when I was beginning to lead the dreaming, reading, dawdling existence which best suits me [wails Jane] . . . to find myself in the thick of a new mess; the carpets, which I had nailed down so well with my own hands, tumbled up again, dirt, lime, whitewash, oil, paint hard at work as before, and the prospect of new cleanings, new sewings, new arrangements stretching away into eternity for anything I see!

Especially as, when all the new change has been completed, Carlyle declares that the strangeness of his new room makes it harder to work in than the noise in the old one, and goes shifting about from one side of the house to the other all day, 'like a sort of domestic Wandering Jew.' No wonder Jane declares defiantly, 'I will lie on the sofa by heaven for two weeks and read French novels!'

It is all this which apparently convinced Froude that Carlyle drove Jane distracted through an inability to endure with ordinary patience the smallest inconvenience of life, and which inspired his comment that 'whereas she was expected to bear her troubles in patience, and received homilies on the duty of submission if she spoke impatiently, he was never more eloquent than when speaking of his own crosses.' It is true that Carlyle before marriage, in all the ignorance and innocence of a bachelor, had written: 'It is the nature of a woman (for she is entirely passive, not active) to cling to the man for support and direction, to comply with his humours and feel pleasure in doing so, simply because they are his'—but it would be interesting to know how he would have answered Froude's comment in a candid mood. Mrs. Ireland goes still further in her championship of Jane, and declares: 'She never complained to her husband—what woman of spirit would have done so?' when the truth is, at that time she hardly ever put pen to paper without administering to him some kind of 'shrewing.' That Car-

lyle was difficult to live with is certainly obvious, but that Jane was difficult to live with is certainly no less obvious. Carlyle knew his own weaknesses, even if he could not control them; Jane did not recognize some of hers, which inevitably makes her forfeit some of the spectator's sympathy. Even Geraldine Jewsbury, the heroine worshipper, has to confess that Jane could be very provoking! She knew well enough that she was hot-tempered, 'a brimstone of a creature,' and that when she is roused she is too apt to vent the spleen of the moment upon her husband, though at the next moment she is ready to fall at his feet and wash them with her tears—which, as she remarks a little tartly in an early letter, 'is very wrong and unworthy of a woman of sense and feeling; yet surely it is not the sin against the Holy Ghost.' While her mother was alive, she was probably the chief victim, and Jane as a young married woman, visiting Templand in 1839, can hardly have been a very agreeable visitor.

My mother continues the worst natured of women. . . . Once a day, generally after breakfast, she tries a fall with me. And in three words I give her to understand that I will not be snubbed.

One suspects that her temper flared out continually in Cheyne Row, and that the entry in Carlyle's journal in April, 1840, was not an isolated instance: 'Work ruined for the day. Imprudently expressed complaints in the morning filled all the sky with clouds.' On another occasion (1851), when they had been visiting friends and were parting to go in different directions, she thinks that he came to kiss her good-bye with a lighted cigar in his mouth. Evidently she flamed out at him on the spot, and he had not defended himself, and he writes after her the true explanation—which would be comic if the episode had not evidently been near tragedy:

That of the cigar, at which you showed so much offence, not much to my consolation on the way homeward, was an attempt on my part to whisper to you that I had given the maid half a crown, nothing more or other, as I am a living sinner.

Or there is that occasion on which she writes a tempestuously angry letter when Carlyle changes his plans and she gives up some visits to go back to London again—only to find that she has misunderstood his intentions. She writes the letter overnight, finds two from him next morning with full explanations and apologies, but comes to the strange conclusion, 'I must let the long letter I wrote yesterday go. . . . It is too much writing to throw away, after having given myself a headache over it.' This sort of thing makes one thoroughly agree with her when she says, 'I am a horrid little egotist, as you know'; and indeed it is impossible not to admire Carlyle's unfailing gentleness and loyalty to her in the face of the often petty and querulous complaints she makes to him of his shortcomings, or what she considers are his shortcomings. She is often voluble, aggressive and resentful for no just cause whatever. She has a very nasty tongue when she is on edge; and no wonder Carlyle was hurt when she dismisses a long letter he has written her, by saying 'it will read charmingly in your biography,' or describes

herself lying awake at night, 'not what you call awake, that is, dozing; but broad wide awake.' Of course, she is always sorry after she has been unkind to him, but he *never* loses patience with her, assuring her that he is glad she makes her 'bits of complaints' freely to him, as he can understand and sympathize with her in everything she has to suffer, if only she will trust him and believe in his love—even declaring that sometimes when she has been ill her anger is a kind of comfort to him, as he thinks, 'Well, she has strength enough to be cross and ill-natured at me; she is not all softness and affection and weakness.' His only defence against her really cruel attacks is to declare that she has lost her instinctive understanding of him.

> O Jeannie, you know nothing about me just now. With all the clearness of vision you have, your lynx eyes do not reach into the inner region of me, and know not what is in my heart. . . . I wish you did; I wish you did.

The hardest thing to forgive Jane, though, is not the morbid suspicions which poisoned some

years of her life, but the things she wrote to her husband at that time. They can be accounted for by her health; and her love shone out again later as brightly and serenely as ever love did. But not only did she write such things *to* him, she wrote them *of* him to other people; and all friends of Jane must wish with all their hearts that she had not done so. He never set down one single word in malice about her, and she can set our teeth on edge by her disloyal little gibes. She insinuates that Carlyle makes her nail down the carpets herself to save expense; that she gets a face-ache from his having insisted on her sitting in a violent draught during a long train journey; that no attention must be paid to any report he makes of her improvement in health, because as long as she can stand on her legs he never notices that there is anything the matter with her. She declares that while he complains bitterly if he wakes once in the night, she wakes twenty or thirty times every night of her life and gets no sympathy at all. She suggests that Carlyle is vain: 'with all his hatred of being made a lion of, he seems to tolerate those

that make him so marvellously well,' and that his affection for the little dog Nero is based on the fact that he enjoys the flattery of his attentions.

When he comes down gloomy in the mornings, or comes in wearied from his walk, the infatuated little beast dances round him on its hind legs as I ought to and can't; and he feels flattered and surprised by such unwonted capers to his honour and glory.

Finally, she is hateful to John Forster, as she writes to him about the proofs of Geraldine Jewsbury's novel, which she has been correcting.

I am bothered about these proofs; Carlyle has got some furious objection to my meddling with them—even declares that I "do not know bad grammar when I see it any more than she does." . . .

I do think there is much truth in the Young German idea that marriage is a shockingly immoral institution, as well as what we have long known it for—an extremely disagreeable one.

Please countermand the proofs, for every one that comes occasions a row.

Of course, Jane was not deliberately disloyal. At bottom she was utterly devoted to her husband

and to the well-being of himself and his work. If any one else dares to criticize him she fluffs herself out like an angry little cat and spits back in his defence: 'I gave him of course as *good* or a pretty deal *better* than he brought,' she declares when old Sterling has presumed to attack *Past and Present*. She would have been horrified probably if she had found herself faced with this collection of instances in which her tongue and her pen had run away with her. But she suffered all her life from a love of dramatizing herself. She owns to it indeed: 'It is not only a faculty with me, but a necessity of my nature to make a great deal out of nothing.' It was really perhaps the result of a craving for creative power, and the fact that she just fell short of any real creative power. She had a strong dash of the artistic temperament without any ability to produce art, and it was that which drove her to pose continually in some dramatic rôle. It was a characteristic she used even in death, leaving instructions behind her that a pair of candles, over which she had had a quarrel with her mother more than twenty years before, should

burn as tapers beside her body. Over and over again we catch her doing it in her letters—speaking of George Rennie as an old *rejected* lover; talking about wrapping herself in her fur mantle of imperturbability (which can certainly never have fitted her very snugly); making an epic of her household achievements at Craigenputtock to Mary Smith; inventing an entirely imaginary psychology of the course of her feeling for Carlyle, to her cousin Babbie; or presenting herself in her notebook of 1845 as the intimate confidante of everybody's miseries. But first and foremost she dramatized herself in her position as Carlyle's wife. Her chief brilliance in conversation, as we have already seen, was in her power to select and arrange the details of their domestic troubles for public representation, and to throw over the whole an irresistible colouring of satiric comedy as she illustrated the foolishnesses and the weaknesses of the great man she banteringly called His Wisdom. She uses the same power in her letters, and as long as her humour is in the ascendant, though she presents herself all the time as a martyr to

the eccentricities of genius, she can laugh at and satirize herself in that character of martyr, so that the reader escapes the uncomfortable feeling that she is taking herself seriously in the part. She is just a delicious comedienne. But her health and her temperament caused her humour to be frequently in eclipse, and at such times she has not always the sense to be silent. 'When one can only ray out darkness, best clap an extinguisher on oneself,' she remarks wisely; but unfortunately she does not always do so, and the results are those bitter little passages where the instinct to be dramatic is still active, and produces the vitriolic little vignettes which in a happier mood would have been successful witticisms. It must have been in some such mood that Mrs. Brookfield heard her describing how grateful she has to be for even the clumsiest attentions from her husband:

> The very least attention from Carlyle just glorifies me. When I have one of my headaches, and the sensation of red-hot knitting needles darting into my brain, Carlyle's way of expressing sympathy is to rest a heavy hand on the top of my head and keep it there in perfect

silence for several seconds, so that although I could scream with nervous agony, I sit like a martyr, smiling with joy at such a proof of profound pity from him.

Or take the episode of the passport in the summer of 1852. She was in the midst of a black mood, and Carlyle's letters from Scotland are all telling of his inextinguishable love and sympathy for her in her troubles; but unluckily at the same time he finds he has forgotten to bring his passport for Germany, whither he is sailing direct, and he has to ask her to get it for him. Jane was struggling with house-cleaning, and her comment is in a letter to her brother-in-law John:

It is much to be wished that Mr. C. could learn not to leave everything to the last moment, throwing every one about him as well as himself into the most needless flurry. I am made quite ill with that passport; had to gallop about in street-cabs *by the hour*, like a madwoman, and lost two whole nights' sleep in consequence—the first from anxiety, the second from fatigue.

Comically treated, she would have made the story into a little satiric masterpiece—as she probably did later when retailing it over the fire to Forster

or David Masson or Gavan Duffy, but as it stands it is just rather a nasty little whine about her husband to a third person. Here again, however, no one knows better than herself the dangers of her own nature, and in 1850 we find her deciding as she starts a wail and splutter about her household misfortunes to keep her squalid difficulties to herself, till she has had time to take a bird's-eye view of them and 'work them up, at my ease, into a conversational "work of art." ' All this was the result of developing what the psychoanalysts would call an inferiority complex; but without giving it any label, it is easy to understand her point of view. There are none of these stabs when she and Carlyle were young and fighting the battle toward achievement together—none, that is, before the publication of *The French Revolution.* Then she really knew herself to be an essential to his future success. She had chosen to marry him against the advices of her family and friends, and her faith in him was her whole existence; while on his side, the literary world, after its early acceptance of his promise, had decided that that promise was not to

be fulfilled, and had given him the cold shoulder, so that he had literally nothing but his wife's unwavering optimism to rely on for encouragement and support. After the success of *The French Revolution* it was inevitable that Jane should find that the position of helpmeet to a struggling genius and the position of wife to a successful literary lion were very different. She felt her importance undermined. She still had the trying part of the work—the suffering of his humours and the smoothing of his physical path—but she could not help seeing that it was pleasant for him to have praise, flattery, admiration, and respect from all the clever men and agreeable women who came flocking round him once he had made his name—men and women who accepted herself, not first and foremost as the remarkable woman who had been convinced of this man's genius from the first, but as the lady of the house; not as the lioness, but merely as the lion's wife; not as Jane Welsh, but as Mrs. Thomas Carlyle. She illustrates her case to John Sterling in 1835, thanking him for a letter 'all to herself' instead of a joint one to them both:

For, in spite of the honestest efforts to annihilate my I-ety or merge it in what the world doubtless considers my better half, I still find myself a self-subsisting, and alas! self-seeking *me*. Little Felix, in the "Wanderjahre," when, in the midst of an animated scene between Wilhelm and Theresa, he pulls Theresa's gown and calls out, "Mamma Theresa, I too am here!" only speaks out with the charming trustfulness of a little child what I am perpetually feeling, though too sophisticated to pull people's skirts or exclaim in so many words, "Mr. Sterling, I too am here."

As age and bad health advanced upon her, the suspicion that she was not quite duly appreciated, and the attempt to insist on recognition of her own individuality, both strengthened themselves in her, in spite of her own very considerable personal social success, and in spite of all Carlyle's tenderly repeated denials of the least change in him.

IV

Though we may believe any unhappiness in Jane's life to have been the result of causes within herself—some of which she understood very clearly and some of which were perhaps hid-

den from her—it is impossible to ignore certain facts outside herself, which Froude and his following have declared to have been the cause of what they regard as her tragedy. That is, the plain question must be discussed: Was Carlyle sexually impotent? In this age of outspoken comment on sexual topics and the acceptance by the medical profession of the enormous part they play in human health and happiness, such a question is no longer one of a prurient or scandalous interest to the public, but simply a problem of psychology. It is true that a great deal of nonsense is talked nowadays about the relationship of genius and sex. A whole book has recently been published trying to prove that the character of Edgar Allan Poe's genius was the direct result of sexual impotency, just as the article by Frank Harris, referred to later, attempted to explain the character of Carlyle's genius as traceable to the same cause—which seems about as sensible as to say that the peculiar genius of Jane Austen and that of Charlotte Brontë are alike obviously the result of both writers having been virgins. But the relationship

of human *happiness* to questions of sex is a very different matter, hence the far greater importance of the discussion in relation to Jane than in relation to Carlyle himself: for if the case could be proved to be as Froude stated it, it might solve a whole complex human situation.

This, then, is the evidence for the allegation. The statement was first publicly made in the pamphlet by Froude, published posthumously in 1903, called *My Relations with Carlyle*. Here Froude states that for years before Jane's death it was common gossip that the Carlyles lived unhappily together and that 'it was not a real marriage, but only companionship.' He declares that he paid no attention to such rumours, as being no concern of his, but that when it became known that he was to write Carlyle's biography, Miss Geraldine Jewsbury, 'Mrs. Carlyle's most intimate friend,' came to tell him that she had some information which he ought to know. This was that the explanation of all the disharmony between the Carlyles was that 'Carlyle was one of those persons who ought never to have married'; that Mrs.

Carlyle had longed for children, and considered that although Carlyle had been quite unaware of his condition before marriage, nevertheless a deep injury had been done to her which she could never forgive. This information, says Froude, was too exact and too seriously given for any doubt to be possible of its truth, and he was faced with the problem of whether he should admit it or suppress it in his published volumes. He finally decided to suppress any actual statement, while dropping a few hints, and he left the manuscript version of the story for future publication should his executors regard it as necessary. It was published by his children as a counterblast to Mr. Alexander Carlyle's attack on Froude in the *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*.

The next published repetition of the statement was an article in *The English Review* for February, 1911, by Frank Harris, purporting to be an account of a conversation he had had with Carlyle in 1878, in which Carlyle had confessed to him that he had never consummated his marriage. Frank Harris says Carlyle told him that he had

come to realize that Jane would have been happier married to Irving, and he puts the following words into Carlyle's mouth:

> The body part seemed so little to me, I had no idea it could mean much to her. I should have thought it degrading her to imagine that . . . Quarter of a century passed before I discovered how wrong I was, how mistaken, how criminally blind. . . . It was the doctor told me and then it was too late for anything but repentance.

Frank Harris followed this by a passage in his privately printed *My Life and Loves* (1925), in which he declares that at a dinner at the Garrick Club in 1886 or 1887 he met Sir Richard Quain, the physician who had attended Mrs. Carlyle in all the later part of her life; that Sir Richard Quain stated that when he had examined her in late middle age he found her to be *virgo intacta*, and that Mrs. Carlyle herself described to him the events of her wedding night—of how her hysterical nervousness at the discovery of her husband's impotence caused her to burst into a fit of laughing, upon which Carlyle left her in a rage.

The objection to all these stories as evidence of any value is that in each case the teller of the story can be so easily completely discredited as a witness. That Geraldine Jewsbury was Jane's most intimate friend is one of Froude's pet delusions, which only needs a few quotations from Jane's own letters to refute utterly. 'The most gossiping and romancing of all our acquaintance,' she calls her; and again, 'It is her besetting weakness by nature, and her trade of novelist has aggravated it,—the desire of feeling and producing violent emotion.' She describes Geraldine as 'making the craziest love' to a man she knows to be already engaged, declares that men won't stay alone in a room with her for fear of being compromised, and that 'she has absolutely no sense of decency.' 'A flimsy tatter of a creature,' Carlyle calls her, and writes to Jane about her after a short acquaintance: 'I wish she could once get it firmly in her head that neither woman nor man . . . was born for the exclusive, or even for the chief, purpose of falling in love, or being fallen in love with'; while Carlyle's opinion of her veracity is very clearly ex-

pressed in his criticism of her manuscript book of stories about his wife as 'this book of myths'—'few or none of these narratives are correct.'

Nor does Froude appear to have made the slightest effort to sift the story or to produce a scrap of further evidence in support of it. At the time when it was presumably communicated to him (circa 1873), there were numbers of people alive who could have definitely confirmed or definitely contradicted it—Carlyle himself, his brother John, doctors who had attended both Carlyle and his wife, and Jane's most intimate friends, Dr. and Mrs. Russell of Thornhill. Yet Froude allowed the statement to rest on nothing but the word of Geraldine Jewsbury, and hints that the matter was in the nature of an open secret among the Carlyle circle.

The Frank Harris accounts must be viewed with the same suspicion. It may be true that Carlyle had a great deal of false delicacy. There is a tragi-comedy in one of Jane's letters which gives an illustration of it. He went to the chemist to order her some blue pills, but as there was 'a gentleman' in

the shop, he did not like to say, 'Send Mrs. Carlyle's pills,' so he ordered 'the pills for our house.' The result was that the chemist sent some of Carlyle's variety of pill, which had ten times more mercury in them than Jane's, and that she took one before the mistake was discovered! And as there is this much proof of Carlyle's over-modesty, there is also a shred of evidence about Sir Richard Quain. Jane mentions in one of her letters after her recovery from her last bad illness, that she feels ashamed to go and see Dr. Quain 'after all the dreadful questions and answers that passed between us.' This agrees with one part of the alleged account given by Sir Richard Quain to Frank Harris, in which he speaks of Mrs. Carlyle's unnecessary delicacy in consulting him, but it is entirely impossible to reconcile the story of the wedding night, as she is made to tell it by Frank Harris, with anything whatever we know about her.

Again, Sir James Crichton-Browne declares that on one occasion he dined with Sir Richard Quain, and that when the story of Carlyle's impotence was introduced, Quain 'laughed it to scorn.'

Finally, in the introduction to the second volume of *My Life and Loves,* Frank Harris confesses that he finds that his memory colours incidents dramatically.

> For example, I had been told a story by some one, it lay dormant in me for years; suddenly some striking fact called back the tale and I told it as if I had been present, and it was fulfilled with dramatic effects, far beyond the first narration. I am no longer a trustworthy witness.

Which, as he owns he has no contemporary notes of any importance with which to substantiate his narratives, makes further comment superfluous.

But although the actual evidence in proof of the view that Carlyle was impotent is so unsatisfactory, it cannot be said that the actual evidence against it is much more satisfactory. Mr. D. A. Wilson [6] thinks 'there is no longer room for two opinions'; but it is doubtful if there is anything really conclusive in anything that he or Sir James Crichton-Browne [7] or Mr. Alexander Carlyle have to say. Mr. Wilson's main argument rests on a con-

[6] *The Truth About Carlyle* (1913).
[7] *British Medical Journal,* January 27, 1903.

versation he had with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy in 1897. It is a pity that Sir Charles never put the story into writing, as Mr. Wilson says he once offered to do, but its substance, confirmed also by David Masson in conversation with Mr. Wilson, is this: That Gavan Duffy, having heard the report of Carlyle's impotency as current gossip, had told Carlyle himself about the rumour. That in reply Carlyle had said that he and his wife had had normal marital relationships until (very early) climacteric conditions started with Jane. That then her mother suggested to her that she would best get over the difficult years in front of her by persuading her husband to abstain from intimacy and to let her sleep apart. Naturally, he consented.

Further evidence brought forward by those who believe that Carlyle was a perfectly normal man sexually is the passage in the *Reminiscences* where he speaks of Jane's child's chair.

> Her little bit of a first chair, its wee, wee arms. . . . No daughter or son of *hers* was to sit there; so it had

been appointed us, my Darling. I have no *Book* thousandth part as beautiful as Thou; but these were *our* only "Children,"—and in a true sense they *were* verily OURS.

Miss Mary Aitken, who lived with Carlyle after Jane's death, found in a drawer at Cheyne Row a little bundle of baby clothes; and two other Miss Aitkens told Mr. Wilson that their mother used to say that twice at Craigenputtock Jane believed herself to be pregnant. Mr. Alexander Carlyle thinks a letter of Carlyle's to his wife before she joined him in London for the winter of 1831 is further proof of this. He begs her to take great care of herself, for 'there is more than thine own that thou carriest with thee.' Mr. Alexander Carlyle adds that the hardships of the journey brought on a miscarriage.

None of these statements are real proof. For example, in the *Reminiscences* Carlyle speaks of going through a box of Jane's, full of relics of her parents and her 'infant self.' He mentions her christening cap among them, and it seems possible that the baby clothes found at Cheyne Row may

have been her own clothes as a baby, and not any which she had made later. Then, again, Carlyle frequently tells her in his letters in the early days of their marriage that she is a living part of himself. In the letter immediately preceding that quoted, he says, 'Remember that properly you are *part of me*, are *I*,' and the passage quoted by Mr. Alexander Carlyle may only mean that, and is no real proof of Jane's pregnancy (unless it is confirmed by unpublished correspondence in the hands of Mr. Alexander Carlyle). If Jane did have a miscarriage on her arrival, it seems very strange that there is no mention of it at all. It is true we have not got her letters to her mother, but we have Carlyle's letters to *his* mother, and Jane's letters to his mother, and there is no hint of it there.

There seems no valid reason, therefore, for saying that there is no longer room for two opinions, but the probability does seem to be against Froude and Frank Harris, and in favour of the circumstances suggested by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy being the facts of the case—not so much be-

cause of the intrinsic weight of the evidence already quoted, but because the whole tone of the letters between Carlyle and Jane in their youth is that of a normally mated couple. Her letters to her husband in their early married life are so utterly different in spirit from those which would have been written by a woman feeling the 'bitter resentment' against an enforced childlessness which Froude describes. Then, again, there is no single reference to her childlessness being a misery to her in the whole of her correspondence or in the fragment of her journal, though one might expect it to be hinted at, if it were true, at the time she is commenting on the Ruskin separation; and her sole reference to her husband as a male being is in a tone of light banter which presupposes that their relations had been perfectly normal. It is in a letter of Mrs. Oliphant's in 1861:

I have had a visit from Mrs. Carlyle, who is looking very feeble and picturesque, but as amusing as ever, and naturally has been taking away everybody's character: or perhaps I ought to say throwing light on the domestic relations of the distinguished people of the period. I

was remarking upon the eccentricity of the said relations, and could not but say that Mr. Carlyle seemed to be the only virtuous philosopher we had. Upon which his wife answered, 'My dear, if Mr. Carlyle's digestion had been stronger, there is no saying what he might have been.'

V

The second fact external to herself which Froude alleges to have caused Jane's marital sufferings is the friendship of Carlyle with Lady Harriet Baring, later Lady Ashburton. According to Geraldine Jewsbury again, this made Jane's life in London a protracted tragedy; owing to it she was more abidingly and intensely miserable than words can utter. Carlyle took everything from her when he wanted it and then threw her aside when he didn't want her; and while he neglected his wife for his work he indulged in sentimental 'Gloriana-worship,' and found time to linger in the primrose path of dalliance with a great lady who liked to have a philosopher in chains. When Froude asked Geraldine for her comments on the fragment of private diary found among Jane's

papers, all this is what she told him. She added, moreover, that when the intimacy with Lady Harriet became so close, Jane almost decided to leave her husband for good, and that one of the things which had hurt her more than anything else in her life was that when later she had confessed this to Carlyle, he had replied, 'Well, I don't know that I should have missed you; I was very busy just then with Cromwell.'

It may be just as well to point out at once where this last story came from. One of the 'family jokes' in the Carlyle household was a story about a north-country farmer whose wife left him for a few days after a quarrel. When she returned she greeted him with the announcement, 'I'se back again, thou sees,' on which her husband replied, 'Back again? I never kenned thou was away!' The story appears several times in Jane's correspondence, and one feels no doubt that she had worked it up into one of her 'conversational works of art,' applying it to an imaginary case in which she left Carlyle, and he made this apocryphal remark. But the theme that Carlyle did his wife a

great wrong by his friendship for Lady Harriet runs all through the later volumes of Froude's *Life*, and the facts of the story are there told in a way which embroiders that idea throughout. The drama will be more accurately presented if we trace it in the letters of some of the actors. Unluckily, we have none of Carlyle's notes to Lady Harriet, or hers to him, to carry on the action, but we have a very full commentary and analysis by Jane of all its stages, and Carlyle himself has a small speaking part.

It is in February, 1839, that he reports that he is to dine with 'a certain Baring.' After the dinner he sits and talks 'a long, long while' with the lady of the house, one Lady Harriet Baring. She is a 'belle laide,' full of mirth and spirits, and one of the cleverest creatures he has ever met. By the beginning of 1843, when we next hear of her—from Jane this time—the philosopher is already in chains. Lady Harriet is ill and her only amusement is conversation at home; but as she knows Mr. Carlyle does not amuse himself, she writes to suggest that it will be a work of *charity* and *piety* if he will go and spend the evening with her. Jane

is much amused at her tactics for getting him! By May of the same year Jane has a great deal to say about it to her cousin Babbie Welsh. The maid happens to say one morning that her master 'seems to take no pleasure in *new females!*' and Jane's pen runs on—

> Yes! there is one *new female* in whom he takes a vast of pleasure, Lady Harriet Baring—I have always omitted to tell you how marvellously that liaison has gone on. Geraldine seemed horribly *jealous* about it—nay, almost *scandalized* when she was here—for my part I am singularly inaccessible to jealousy, and am pleased rather that he has found *one* agreeable house to which he likes to go and goes regularly—one evening a week at least—and then he visits them at their "farm" on Sundays, and there are flights of charming little notes always coming to create a pleasing titillation of the philosophic spirit!

Mrs. Buller (the mother of the boys Carlyle had tutored in his early days), 'in her graceful quizzical way,' invited Jane 'to see a little into the thing' with her own eyes, and arranged that she should meet 'the Intellectual Circle.' Jane's impression is very favourable.

I liked her on the whole—she is immensely *large*—might easily have been one of the ugliest women living—but *is* almost beautiful—simply through the intelligence and cordiality of her expression—I saw nothing of the impertinence and hauteur which people impute to her—only a certain brusquerie of manner which seemed to me to proceed from exuberant spirits and absence of all affectation. She is unquestionably very clever—just the wittiest woman I have seen—but with many aristocratic prejudices—which I wonder Carlyle should have got over so completely as he seems to have done—in a word I take her to be a very lovable spoilt child of Fortune—that a little *whipping* judiciously administered would have made into a first rate woman. . . .

What *she* thought of *me* I should rather like to know—she took prodigious looks at me from time to time. In the last note to Carlyle inviting him to Addiscombe for next Sunday she says—"I meditate paying my respects to Mrs. Carlyle . . . she is a *reality* whom you have hitherto *quite suppressed*."

During the next three years she gossips equally gaily about it all. She makes Lady Harriet's acquaintance in form, and declares that 'that woman's' fascination of her husband proves her to be the most masterly coquette of Modern Times, and

that she has actually persuaded Carlyle to go to the Opera—'nobody knows what he can do till he tries—or rather till a Lady Harriet tries!' When she goes alone to stay at Bay House in September, 1845, she reports to Carlyle that she believes she shall get along very well with her hostess, 'although I can see that the Lady has a genius for ruling, whilst I have a genius for *not being ruled!*' on which her husband makes a chaffing little comment:

> The Lady Harriet has a genius for ruling. Well! did you ever see any Lady that had *not* some slight touch of a genius that way, my Goodikin? I know a lady—but I will say nothing, lest I bring mischief about my ears—nay, she is very obedient, too, that little lady I allude to, and has a genius for being ruled withal. Heaven bless her always! Not a bad little dame at all. She and I did aye very well together.

The acquaintance between the two women soon ripened into affection. Jane is not apt to be enthusiastic about members of her own sex, but she is enthusiastic enough about Lady Harriet. She finds her far cleverer than any of the distinguished

authoresses she has met; a grand woman every inch of her; energetic, sincere, graceful, amusing, and not in the least a coquette; 'if all the men go out of their sober senses beside her, how can she help that?' It is the mystery of her which is her chief attraction to Jane: she never really quite understands her, does not even really know whether Lady Harriet likes her or no. She has never said she does, and she rails at sentiment, though it peeps out in her actions. While she never writes an affectionate sentence, she will put leaves of Jane's favourite flowers in her letters, and she kisses her at meeting and parting, which Jane thinks proves more real affection than twenty reams of protestation from a Geraldine! At any rate, there is no mystery in Jane's side of the friendship: 'I love her now as much as I *admired* her in the beginning.'

Perhaps Carlyle expressed some too warm eulogy of Lady Harriet inopportunely that summer—perhaps he stayed at Bay House when Jane wanted him at home; all we know is that there was certainly a quarrel on the subject, and that

we have one of Carlyle's rare letters actually commenting on Jane's jealousy:

> By God's blessing, what of integrity and propriety there was in all this will one day become clear to all parties. Oh! to think that my affection for *thee!*—but I will not speak on that thing at present. Adieu, my own Jane, whom nothing can divide from *me*.

And again, 'In me is no change, nor was, nor is like to be'—while Lady Harriet sends a cordial note from their holiday home at Moffat, begging Jane to take good medical advice about her health, insisting that she must spend November at Bay House, and ending, 'Your ever affectionate H. Baring.' When November comes, Lady Harriet's magic works once more. Jane had remarked earlier that her hostess was a person of such good sense and good breeding that no one but a fool could have a 'collision' with her, and she feels it even more strongly now. Lady Harriet, obviously suspecting her twinge of jealousy, is determined to show her how unnecessary it is. 'I cannot make out what Lady Harriet is after,' writes Jane, quite mystified. 'To look at her one would say she was

systematically *playing my cards for me*' (which indeed is no doubt exactly what she was doing). She let the parrot interrupt Carlyle when he was saying 'the most sensible things,' in spite of his obvious annoyance, and allows him to meet with 'other little contradictions,' while at the same time she does her best to charm Jane into her old state of affections. Jane almost ruefully admits her complete success, adding that she does not think a human being exists whom Lady Harriet could not charm if she set her mind to it.

In September of the following year there was another coolness. Lady Harriet seems to have had a lapse from her usual discretion and tells a mutual acquaintance at a dinner-party that she considers Jane's bad health all arises from 'unheard-of imprudences' in diet. The acquaintance, needless to say, kindly passes this on to Jane, who declares further that on her next visit to Addiscombe, Lady Harriet tries to brace her by not offering her a fire in her room, or the only wine she cares to drink. But in 1848 we find her on such friendly terms again that she is making marmalade

in the Ashburton kitchen, and again in 1849 there is an enthusiastic testimony to Lady Harriet's (now Lady Ashburton's) charm.

Mr. C. will never succeed in making her "more earnest," dear, gay-hearted, high-spirited woman that she is! God bless her for her seeming determination *not* to be "earnest" for *his* pleasure, or any one else's, but to be just what God has made her, the enemy of *cant* and lover of all mirthful things.

But by this time it seems as if common gossip was busy with the situation, and in March of this year Jane had an experience which, though she retails it with such spirit to her cousin, cannot but have been mortifying to her pride. She and her husband were at a large dinner-party at Dickens's house.

Before dinner, old Rogers, who ought to have been buried long ago, so old and ill-natured he is grown, said to me pointing to a chair beside him, "Sit down, my Dear—I want to ask you; is your husband as infatuated as ever with Lady Ashburton?"—"Oh, of course," I said, *laughing*, "why shouldn't he be?"—"Now—do *you* like her—tell me honestly is she kind to *you*—as kind as she is to your husband?" "Why you know it is

impossible for *me* to know *how* kind she is to my husband; but I *can* say she is extremely kind to *me* and I should be stupid and ungrateful if I did *not* like her." "Humph! (disappointedly) well! it is very good of you to like her when she takes away all your husband's company from you—he is always there, isn't he? . . . spends all his evenings with her, I'm told?" "No, not all—for example, you see, he is *here* this evening." "Yes," he said in a tone of vexation, "I see he is here *this* evening—and *hear* him too—for he has done nothing but talk across the room since he came in." Very devilish old man! but he got no satisfaction to his devilishness out of *me*.

Jane never again makes another agreeable reference to Lady Ashburton. It is impossible to know now if she is reporting truthfully in all she says, but from the earlier course of the episode, and from all we know of the other actors, it seems more than likely that her state of health made her unconsciously warp the truth about Lady Ashburton's dealings with her. According to Jane's letters, however, she has to suffer a series of insults. Carlyle is asked to join the Ashburtons for holidays and she is excluded from the invitations, or

when Lady Ashburton comes to town for a few days she declares she has no time to see Jane, and at the same time invites Carlyle to dinner at Bath House. Commenting on this incident to her cousin, she writes (1851):

> I suppose I ought to feel by this time quite resigned to such annoyances . . . but I am angry and sorrowful all the same. It is not of course any caprice *she* can show to me that annoys me. I have long given up the generous attempt at loving her. But it is to see *him* always starting up to defend everything she does and says and no matter whether it be capricious behaviour toward his *wife*—so long as she flatters himself with delicate attentions.

To Carlyle himself she sends little barbed gibes of jealousy, telling him, when he writes of his discomforts at the Ashburton shooting-lodge in Scotland, not to pretend that he isn't perfectly happy and that he wants to be back with her; and writing to her little dog Nero (under cover to T. Carlyle, Esq.) when she is staying at Addiscombe, 'The lady for whom I abandoned you—to whom all family ties yield—is pretty well again . . .' The climax of her wretchedness over

the affair is in her journal for the autumn of 1855:

> Oct. 22. That eternal Bath House. I wonder how many thousand miles Mr. C. has walked between there and here, putting it all together; setting up always another milestone betwixt himself and me.
>
> Nov. 5. Alone this evening. Lady A. in town again; and Mr. C. of course at Bath House.

Mrs. Brookfield reports that when Jane received a silk dress from the Christmas tree at The Grange that Christmas, she made a scene and 'vowed she was being insulted,' so that Lady Ashburton had to go to her room and assure her with tears in her eyes that no offence had been meant. Froude of course accepts the tone of the last few years of Jane's comments on the situation as her attitude throughout. He declares that she had no wish for Lady Harriet's acquaintance, and that Carlyle forced her into a situation she detested. Mrs. Ireland follows him in speaking of Jane's visits to the Ashburtons' country places, The Grange and Bay House, as 'martyrdoms undergone by Mrs. Carlyle to please her husband.' That this is mani-

festly absurd, Jane's own earlier letters prove conclusively, even if we did not have one from Carlyle written in reply to an express question from his wife as to whether or no she should accept an invitation.

> Follow your own authentic wish in regard to it. . . . Do thy own way, Goody—what more can I counsel? If the visit is *not* disagreeable, perhaps a ten days or week of it might stir you up and do you good. Consider it thy own self; and do what seems best.

On which she went and stayed a month!

Nor can any one think for a moment that Carlyle had anything to be ashamed of in the matter, in spite of all the gossip which his friendship provoked. Never, in all his saddest moments of self-reproach, did he express the least self-blame about his feeling for Lady Ashburton. He claims her regard for him as among his proudest and most valued possessions, and at her death (in 1857) that he had lost such a friend as he had never had, nor was again in the least likely to have. Lady Ashburton too has the same staunch sense of pride in the friendship, as we can see from a letter of

hers to Mrs. Brookfield in 1853. She is writing on the subject of the difficulty of intimacies:

> I constantly say to myself, you cannot help it, you are made to have acquaintances, not friends, your lot is cast in an age where no one wants friends, where all that people want from associating with each other is given by acquaintanceship; and if the term friend is used it is a mere homage to an extinct form. Having said that and turned very uncomfortably over to the other side of one's mind to see if anything not so dreary could come, I there always find my dear old Prophet Carlyle, and has one any right to more than one such friend in a lifetime?

But to say all this is of course not to say that Jane did not suffer in the matter, though her suffering was not caused, as Geraldine Jewsbury claimed, by the fault of others, but by the twisting of her own heart. Commentators, disproving Froude, say glibly that naturally she had no cause for *real* jealousy, as if a technically 'guilty' illicit love affair were the only justification for such a state of mind. But all forms of jealousy are 'real' enough, and that Jane's was aggravated by the condition of her health can have made it none the

less painful. She may have suspected that people thought Lady Harriet wittier than herself, so that it was her intellectual rivalry which she feared and which caused the change in her feelings towards her, or it may have been some social slight which rankled, but at that time she was in the grip of climacteric melancholia, and if she had not been unhappy about Carlyle and Lady Ashburton she would no doubt have found some other major cause for her misery. That the Ashburton affair was in no way the *cause* of her wretchedness is proved by the fact that the melancholia did not develop until years after the episode had started, and continued unchanged years after Lady Ashburton's death. But this subject belongs more properly in a general discussion of Jane's health.

VI

No attempt will be made here to diagnose any of Jane Carlyle's many ills from a medical point of view. It is quite possible that her torturing sick headaches had their cause in defective eyesight; it is quite possible that the obscure internal injury

from the fall she had when she was sixty-two could be better examined nowadays; it is quite obvious that according to modern ideas her treatments for sleeplessness and indigestion were most misguided. But such speculations are irrelevant. Her life was lived without the advantages of modern medicine, her personality and behaviour were evolved by the actual conditions she suffered, and she had nothing but the knowledge of her own day and her own shrewdness and self-observation to help her. Mr. D. A. Wilson may think Carlyle suffered more than she did from the effects of her ailments; Sir James Crichton-Browne may dismiss all her troubles under the convenient label of neuroticism, while others may think Sir James's analysis may be all dismissed as tommyroticism; but meanwhile, there is Jane's own side to be heard first.

In 1846 we find her writing whimsically:

> Carlyle should have had "a strong-minded woman" for wife, with a perfectly sound liver, plenty of *solid fat*, and mirth and good-humour world without end—men do best with their opposites. I am too like himself

in some things—especially as to the state of our livers, and so we aggravate one another's tendency to despair!

Whether that much abused organ, the liver, was really to blame or not, long before her marriage we hear of these agonizing headaches, which would last from twenty-four to sixty hours, and which no treatment seemed to touch. Carlyle said that he had never seen such headaches in his life, and she declares that they leave her all beaten into impalpable pulp. She gives a detail of one in a letter of 1844:

Two days after my last headache I missed a little ring from my finger which I wear constantly—I made a strict search for it and finally had to give it up for lost—when Carlyle putting his hand into *the inside pocket of his dressing gown* felt something, and drew out in wonder the ring!—in my agony that day my hands were clutching at everything within their reach and had clutched it seemed into his pockets and left the ring there!

Less than two years after marriage we find Carlyle writing that his wife, though not by any means an established valetudinarian, yet seldom

has a day of true health. A year or two later he repeats the same thing—that she does not lie in bed, but is always in a sickly sort of way with a kind of deep-seated dyspepsia, and a year or two after that that she has been ill all winter with colds, never very ill, yet never well. Harriet Martineau used to say that Mrs. Carlyle had eight influenzas annually, and it is true that Jane seldom writes a letter without referring to some past or present ill. There never seems to be a time when she is not tugging with influenza like a fly among treacle, or prostrated with sick headache, convulsed with colic, wild with face-ache, demolished by sleepless nights, bedevilled with neuralgia, feeling as if she had been pounded in a mortar, or as if she had St. Vitus's dance in all her veins, weak as a dishclout, without the strength of a robin redbreast, trying to keep herself perpendicular by 'incredible precautions,' or dosing herself with blue pill, castor oil, or morphia. 'I should like to have the feeling of being well again, tho' it were only for five minutes,' she exclaims when she is only forty-four. Of course, her treat-

ments seem odd to us nowadays. Her mother, about whose medical knowledge Mr. Wilson is so enthusiastic, was the sort of person who ordered 'a gross of pills' for her own use when she was going on a few weeks' visit. Jane herself had the good sense and the amazing fortitude to pour buckets of cold water over herself every morning, even during the winter at Craigenputtock! But she followed the fashion of her time in wrapping herself up in shawls, wearing a respirator, and staying indoors all the winter, 'a little live bundle of flannel and dressing gowns,' as preventive measures against colds, and when she wants to suggest the depths of folly, she says something is as stupid as if a person were to eat raw vegetables and refuse nourishing broth and roast meat. Indeed, as far as we can see, she and Carlyle treated the weaknesses of their digestive tracts by eating and drinking exclusively all the things likely to aggravate their troubles—bread, meat, potatoes, coffee, and tea. Vegetables they seem rarely to touch, and regard fruit as 'of no use but to give people a colic.'

To a person of normal physical vigour, Jane's ills, troublesome as they must have been, would not probably have played so large a part as they did in her consciousness, but they were aggravated by a nervous system completely abnormal in its sensibility. Its most obvious and distressing symptom was her sleeplessness. No doubt, like most bad sleepers, she was inclined to exaggerate this; but it is impossible to read the mournful, ever-recurrent refrain of her bad nights which runs through her letters during her whole married life, and not to feel that she suffered grievously. The most trivial discomfort, the slightest noise, becomes an assassin murdering her rest, and the entry in her journal of December 4, 1855, gives a glimpse of a horror to which no one can refuse pity:

> I hardly ever begin to write here that I am not tempted to break out into Jobisms about my bad nights. . . . Oh, to cure any one of a terror of annihilation, just put him on my allowance of sleep, and see if he don't get to long for sleep, sleep, unfathomable and everlasting sleep as the only conceivable heaven.

No one knew better than she did how all this nervous irritability handicapped her in holding a sane view of things, and the first witness against her own weakness is always herself. She knows how absurdly she frets over little things which a tougher-fibred personality would laugh at; how fatigues which would make a healthy person sleepy put her in a delirium of jangled nerves; how the discomforts of a strange house, which would produce discontent or irritation to the robust, immediately give her acute nervous indigestion, sleeplessness, and neuralgia. She used to trace her sensitiveness to the fact that she was a seven months' child, and to overwork in her early days at school; but whatever its cause, it was real enough, and it is that which gives the descriptions of her life in her letters that atmosphere of much ado about next to nothing which continually haunts them: that conviction that the daily round and the common task at 5 Cheyne Row is so much harder than in any other household; that servants are much more trying, workmen much more messy, sewing much more wearisome, interrup-

tions much more irritating, and paint much more smelly. Mingled, too, with her accounts of her exaggerated domestic hardships and her perpetual bad health, and proving how largely both were created by her nervous excitability, are accounts of perpetual remarkable recoveries. As she says, one day she is ill in bed, the next in full puff at an entertainment; in the morning she has 'cholera' and in the afternoon she is dining out. In spite of her eight influenzas, she never misses one of Carlyle's lectures. On one occasion she describes humorously to Carlyle what an effective sleeping draught she has had: 'Not that I swallowed it! I merely set it by my bedside; and the feeling of lying down under new conditions put me to sleep.' Or again, she describes how one day in 1855 she is lying, a physical wreck, on the sofa, unable to make any effort, when the door opens and George Rennie, after an absence of many years abroad, walks in unexpectedly to see her. She jumps up and kisses him 'a great many times,' and the result is a miracle of healing.

Oh, it has done me so much good, this meeting! My bright, whole-hearted, impulsive youth seemed conjured back by his hearty embrace. For certain, my late deadly weakness was conjured away. *A spell on my nerves* it had been, which dissolved in the unwonted feeling of gladness. I am a different woman this evening. I am well! I am in an atmosphere of *home* and *long ago!*

Another day she is equally collapsed, when she is persuaded to go to a party at Mrs. Macready's. The party proves a very merry and wild affair, with Bohemian London playing the fool wholeheartedly far into the night. 'And the result? Why the result, my dear, was that I went to bed on my return and slept like a top!!! Plainly proving that *excitement* is my *rest*.' She knows her own nature very well, and when friends suggest the benefit of a quiet change in the country, with the advantages of country air and country fare, she points out that it involves also the insuperable disadvantage of country dulness: 'A little exciting talk is many times, for a person of my temperament, more advantageous to bodily health than either judicious physicking or nutritious diet

or good air.' While she is declaring herself too ill to do things which bore her, and the performance of unpleasant duties knocks her up at once, it is seldom that her health stands in the way of anything she really wants to do, and any pleasurable effort braces her at once. She joins with complete enjoyment in 'youthful and uproarious games' at The Grange when she is forty-eight, and she herself owns that often when she is reported very ill and her friends come to inquire for her, she can rouse herself so successfully that they go away in doubt as to whether she is the most stoical of women, or whether there is nothing whatever the matter with her.

Her emotional impulsiveness and even her habit of rushing headlong at physical activities—falling on domestic cleaning 'like a tiger,' or rushing about quite unnecessarily and then claiming sympathy for her consequent exhaustion, is all part of the same temperament; but that she felt emotions with an intensity quite preternatural is obvious. The passion of enthusiasm she feels for the temperance reformer Father Matthew, which makes

her burst out crying 'in the utmost agitation' at his meeting, is part of the same quality which makes her grief at her mother's death, and her remorse at her sins as a daughter, so painful in its almost grotesque force. She refuses to return to Templand for more than ten years, she has hysterics on visiting the house where she first heard the news of her loss, and she brings a nettle from the churchyard where her mother is buried, to plant in the Chelsea garden, and is very hurt and angry when she finds the gardener has weeded it out. Or again, when she thinks Carlyle has not written to her for her birthday, she is in a frenzy of despair. She has gone to the post office to fetch the letter and has been told that there is nothing for her:

I walked back again, without speaking a word; and with such a tumult of wretchedness in my heart as you, who know me, can conceive. And then I shut myself up in my room to fancy everything that was most tormenting. Were you finally so out of patience with me that you had resolved to write to me no more at all? Had you gone to Addiscombe and found no leisure there

to remember my existence? Were you taken ill, so ill that you could not write? That last idea made me mad to get off to the railway, and back to London. . . .

Yet here again she disarms criticism by her frank self-knowledge, and when she comments on Lady Ashburton's recovery from the shock of young Charles Buller's sudden death, she notes that while she does not know whether she would care to be able to throw off grief so lightly, yet she sees well enough how much better people who have that faculty both enjoy their own lives and contribute to the enjoyment of others.

So too with her sufferings during middle life—that profound emotional disturbance which clouded more than ten years of her existence. She had always been hyper-sensitive, but at that time her ultra-sensitiveness turned to morbid melancholia, aggravated by the after effects of her continual use of morphia to make her sleep. Her modern critics use harsh terms of her attitude to her husband during these years, but probably Carlyle himself understood her condition better than her critics. His own ill health from his youth

gave him an instinctive knowledge of the relationship of nerves and human conduct. Even as early as 1827 he had noted in his journal:

> I will maintain, and appeal to all competent judges, that no evil conscience with a good nervous system, ever caused a tenth part of the misery that a bad nervous system, conjoined with the best conscience in nature, will always produce.

No doubt Carlyle had a generous share of suffering from what she was enduring through those years; no doubt her companionship was ghastly enough at times; and most certainly his unfailing gentleness and patience with her show him to have been one of the most utterly lovable and loyal of men—but it is only fair to Jane to illustrate some of her pitiful struggles to escape from the curse that was on her. She excuses herself so sadly for working off all her 'Jobisms' on her husband, for treating him so often to nothing but 'the literature of desperation' (July 13, 1857):

> Oh, my! what a shame, when you are left alone there with plenty of smoke of your own to consume, to be puffing out mine on you from this distance! It is cer-

tainly a questionable privilege one's best friend enjoys, that of having all one's darkness rayed out at him. If I were writing to—who shall I say?—I should fill my paper with "wits," and elegant quotations and diverting anecdotes; should write a letter that would procure me laudation sky-high, on my "charming unflagging spirits," and my "extraordinary freshness of mind and feelings"; but to you I cannot for my life be anything but a bore.

She loathed herself for her morbidity, for that black misery which makes her feel that she looks out upon nothing but 'unmitigated zero,' that gives her an eternal hundredweight of leaden thoughts on her heart, that convinces her that she has lost forever the faculty of happiness, and that keeps her in an ever-present terror of the madhouse. We see her trying so hard to busy herself with practical things which shall give her mind no time to fester. She will mend Mr. C.'s dressing-gown to keep her heart from throbbing upward into her head and maddening it; she will try walking six or seven miles every day; she will seriously study industrial conditions in Manchester; she will do certain small things with a certain regularity; she will hold on like grim death

by the safety rope of method amidst the shipwreck of her powers of body and mind; and when things seem more than she can bear, she will write in her journal and say over and over again in her heart, 'Look straight before you, Jane Carlyle. . . . Look above all at the duty nearest hand, and what's more, do it.'

Jane's nervous disease seems to have culminated in the illness which followed the street accident she had in 1863. In the autumn of that year she was suffering from painful and stubborn neuritis in her left arm, but was up and about as usual. One afternoon she went to tea with a cousin who had some appointment at the General Post Office, and planned to take the omnibus home. Owing to some repairs in the street, the bus did not come up to the curb, and as Jane stepped off the pavement to reach it, a cab cut in in front of her. She stopped, lost her balance, tried to save herself from falling on her lame arm, and came down twisting the sinews and ligaments all down one side of her body, and injuring herself internally in some way which did not manifest itself at the

time. For weeks she was bedridden, and in constant pain from the torn muscles; and then Carlyle describes how one evening, as he was sitting reading in the drawing-room, the double doors leading to her bedroom opened, and Jane, 'all radiant and graceful in evening dress,' came gliding in, saying *silently* but so eloquently, 'Here am I come back to you, dear'—a picture of her he never forgot. He thought her then well on the way to complete recovery, but there was far graver unsuspected trouble. A few days later she was seized with 'strange and horrible pain,' which worsened week by week. The doctors were all perfectly helpless. Influenza! Neuralgia! Hysteria! they suggested, but meanwhile for nearly a year her life was drowned in what Carlyle describes as—

> such a deluge of intolerable pain, indescribable, unaidable pain, as I have never seen or dreamt of . . . there seemed to be pain in every muscle, misery in every nerve, no sleep by night or day, no rest from struggle and desperate suffering. Nobody ever known to me could more nobly and silently endure pain; but here for the first time I saw her vanquished, driven hopeless. . . . Oh, I have seen such expressions in those dear and beau-

tiful eyes, as exceeded all tragedy! . . . Her pain she would seldom speak of, but when she did, it was in terms as if there were no language for it; "any honest pain, mere pain, if it were of cutting my flesh with knives or sawing my bones, I could hail as a luxury in comparison."

Some of her letters at this time make heartbreaking reading, with their refrain of anguish, 'every day I suffer more horribly,' but they are all full of a pathetic love for and trust in her husband and his understanding devotion, which had been absent from her heart and pen for something like twenty years. Gradually her mysterious malady burnt itself out. On August 19, 1864, when she was at Holm Hill with her friends the Russells, she reports a great event:

> Something occurred here last evening between the hours of 8 and 9 which produced an extraordinary sensation! My Dear, *I laughed!!!* . . . Mrs. Russell had been telling of a row Mrs. —— had had with her servants. Hearing some disturbance in the room where her maids slept, . . . "Only think what a terrible thing!"—said Mrs. Russell;—"and a great *big* man!" "My Dear," said Dr. Russell, in his quiet dry way,

"would it have been any better if it had been a *little* man?"

Finally she escaped altogether from her physical agony into a serenity of mind and heart which give to the last eighteen months of her life the atmosphere of safe harbour after the perils of barely weathered storm. Her general physical health was no better than it had ever been, but her spirit was reborn to a harmony it had not known since her youth.

VII

Jane's unhappiness during the larger half of her mature life may have had its root in physical causes, but since the relationship of ill health—especially her kind of ill health—and a person's whole practical environment is so closely interwoven, we may well ask whether its main cause was not deeper than a bodily condition, and did not spring from some complete maladjustment of the needs of her nature. As Carlyle had said to her before their marriage, 'the philosophy of living

well is the end of all philosophies,' and Jane's sad answer to that is in a letter to her cousin in 1851:

> Certainly, I am not the best authorized person to tell people how they should manage their lives . . . having made such a mess of my own life—God help me!

No one who heard Jane describing the domestic relations of herself and her husband in conversation, in a stream of good-humoured chaff and wit, could imagine that she regarded the basis of the condition of things she was describing as 'a mess'; nor could any one who knew, under all the surface irritation at Cheyne Row, what sturdy affection grew undisturbed in the deepest nature of both husband and wife. But Jane and Carlyle themselves knew the true facts of the case, the condition of things which was the reason of the real 'mystery' in their married life, much more than the improbable mystery which Froude suspected—Carlyle's impotency. Humour could soften that situation, but that a problem always remained which banter could lighten but could not cure was inevitable—the fact that a brilliant

woman, with no absorbing occupation of her own outside her wifehood, was married to a man with an engrossing creative impulse. Jane writes bitterly to her husband in 1850:

> It is sad and wrong to be so dependent for the life of my life on any human being as I am on you; but I cannot by any force of logic cure myself at this date, when it has become second nature. If I have to lead another life in any of the planets, I shall take precious good care not to hang myself round any man's neck, either as a locket or as a millstone!

That Carlyle deliberately sacrificed his wife's life and happiness to his work, as Froude and Geraldine Jewsbury decided, is absurd; but Carlyle had to do his work. He was an artist, a maker, and an absolutely single-minded one. Popular failure or success in his work alike left him unmoved: he had simply got to get his 'message' stated somehow. 'Had I but two potatoes in the world and one true idea, I should hold it my duty to part with one potato for paper and ink, and live upon the other till I had got it written.' And the getting of it written was torture to him. When a book is sticking in his heart his abode is, 'figura-

tively speaking, the centre of chaos'; it is only with an effort like swimming for life that he can begin to think at all, and the same atmosphere of heavy stress dogs every step of the way. It is as if he writes every word with his heart's blood. Jane once wrote grimly: 'Harriet Martineau used to talk of *writing* being such a *pleasure* to her. In this house we should as soon dream of calling the bearing of children "such a pleasure."' The writing of his books to Carlyle meant untold (or perhaps it would be truer to say, very loudly told), struggles, throes, and lonely travail. Henry Larkin said that when his dark labour-pains were on him he was the most absolutely wretched man he had ever seen. He is thrown into 'bewildered wrestlings,' the task of shaping and uttering is 'frightful': his imagination is a black smithy of the Cyclops where his mind must work at the forge in a continual element of darkness, broken only by lightnings; the work has to be done with his nerves in a kind of blaze, in a red-hot mental environment which roasts his life out; a book is like a load of fire burning his heart, which has to get thrown out of him. All these fiery images sug-

gest something of what Jane calls the sulphury and brimstone atmosphere his creative spirit works in.

But although Carlyle was an artist, an artist who had got to express what was in him in his own way, he was never one of those artists whose way is to sacrifice another human personality to stoke the fires of his own genius. Bernard Shaw defines the true artist as one who 'will risk the stake and the cross; starve when necessary, in a garret all his life . . . work his nerves into rags without payment, a sublime altruist in his disregard of himself, an atrocious egotist in his disregard of others'—the type Shaw himself created in the figure of Louis Dubedat in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, the type, in the world of letters, of Byron or George Sand. Carlyle was a completely different type. Not that he considered the business of his life was to make others happy—the business of his life was to get his own work done—but he considered that he had a duty to others, which was not to tread on their toes as he went about his own concerns. He is much laughed at for what Mazzini

called his Platonic love of Silence, and it is true that in society he was evidently more a monologuist than a conversationalist, but it was always society which sought out Carlyle, not he who sought society. When he is writing, his journal is full of longings for solitude: 'People ought to let me alone'—'if they would but let me alone'—'you wretched people, you cannot help me, you can only hinder me,' and so on; while he longs for a silent prophet's chamber, where he can be waited on by 'some dumb old woman to light a fire daily and boil some kind of kettle.'

That his wife's happiness was injured by his work, as it undoubtedly was, was due partly to the prejudices of the day in regard to women and partly to the quality of Jane's own nature, not at all to the selfishness of Carlyle. He had nothing of the vampire in him. Of course he needed sympathy and encouragement—who doesn't?—and undoubtedly his bodily welfare needed constant and careful looking after; but public opinion and Jane herself both made the mistake of regarding those occupations as her sole and sufficient life's

work. Her lot was to be the wife of a Man of Genius, she speaks of her existence as being spent in the character of 'a human partition' standing between her husband and the outer world, and as a result she made a great deal of it a lonely, wearisome, negative self-sacrifice which was not of the slightest benefit either to Carlyle or to his work. When she says pathetically that the little dog Nero has brought her some comfort, because it really is a comfort to have something alive and cheery and fond of her always there, she is not of course consciously achieving a false pathos; but nevertheless the misery for which she needed comfort was not the misery of being neglected by her husband, but the misery of not having enough to do. She could very easily have combined all the sympathy and encouragement Carlyle needed with having a definite occupation of her own, and as far as running the house comfortably went—in all of what Mazzini used to call the 'cares of bread' and the cares of buttons and shirts and mislaid papers—an efficient housekeeper, which they could have afforded very easily, would have probably

done it all far better than Jane did. Instead of which, she wasted her time over all those nondescript household duties, tough as leather and intangible as smoke and irritating as nettle-rash, which dissipate the energies and produce nothing of the slightest importance—moaning all the time when Carlyle is at home because of his irregular habits or his custom of 'hanging in the wind' and not making up his mind when and where he was going; and spending day after day when she is alone, stretched on the sofa reading books from the circulating library, and dreaming away evening after evening looking dolefully into the fire. . . .

It is, as usual, Carlyle himself who sees into the heart of her need, and he writes to her in 1842:

My prayer is and has always been that you would rouse up the fine faculties that *are* yours into some course of real true work, which you felt to be worthy of them and you! Your life would not then be happy; but it would cease to be miserable. . . . I know well, none better, how difficult it all is,—how peculiar and original your lot looks to you, and in many ways *is*. Nobody can find work *easily* . . . all of us are in horrible difficul-

ties. . . . But I will never give up the hope to see you adequately *busy* with your whole mind.

When she consulted Mazzini in her troubles he could only give her the same advice, and Jane's tragedy was that she never did find her work. Jeffrey said disparagingly of Carlyle that he was 'so dreadfully in earnest,' but it would have been better for Jane if she too had found something which she could be dreadfully in earnest about. She hates 'fine-ladyism' and is very contemptuous of the frivolous life of her Liverpool cousins, but though she has rather more responsibilities than they have, she does little which uses many more of her faculties. It is all very well for her to say touchily to her hard-worked sister-in-law, who had obviously wondered how she occupied herself—

You were never more mistaken than when you imagine a woman needs half a dozen children to keep her uneasy. . . . For my part, I am always as busy as possible.

But she adds no details, and would have found it hard, one imagines, to make a list of her doings

which would have been very impressive to the wife of a poor man with a large family of small children. In her early married life John Carlyle had told her that if he could give her some agreeable occupation to fill her whole mind it would do more for her than all the medicines in existence, and it is impossible to read her letters and not see how vastly she improves in health directly there is something which necessitates her being thoroughly active. Froude's suggestion, indeed, that she was not strong enough for housework, and that Carlyle cruelly used to leave her alone to cope with domestic 'earthquakes,' is very laughable, for she is never better—and never happier—than when she is having what she calls a 'sack of Troy' in the house. She knows that to see something going on, and to help it going on, fulfils a great want in her nature. 'Women, they say, will always give a varnish of duty to their inclinations,' she confesses; so she puts in a grumble or two about Carlyle and a complimentary pat or two for her own head, but she does not really disguise the fact that having something to do agrees with her won-

derfully. She finds physical difficulties, she says, 'rather inspiriting,' and when the house is full of plasterers, plumbers, bricklayers, carpenters, painters, and paper-hangers, she rigs up a gipsy tent in the back garden with the 'crumb-cloth' and the clothes-ropes and poles, and is perfectly happy sitting there writing letters, making chair- and sofa-covers, scolding the work-people, and suggesting to them all improved methods of doing everything! They start work at six o'clock in the morning, which necessitates her getting up then, but Jane, who is usually so full of complaints at her rest being disturbed, has not a word of criticism: 'It makes a prodigious long day; but I do not weary, having so many mechanical things to do.' Her story might have been very different if she had lived a hundred years later and if her 'contriving nature' and business head and excellent taste could have been occupied, say, in the business of house-decorating or dress-designing or some of the many crafts of the present day. Who can say what the necessity of keeping regular hours and employing her mind constantly on practical

problems might have done to her health and spirits and sense of satisfaction with existence? She had the misfortune, however, to live at a time when any such idea would have been grossly improper. As a writer in *The Saturday Review* of February 14, 1857, put it: 'No woman ought to be encouraged in the belief that she has separate interests or separate duties. God and Nature have merged her existence in that of her husband.' So Jane's handicrafts could only take the form of putting new tails on Carlyle's shirts, or covering a screen with prints. She longs for something more, but there is nothing which seems suitable. She suggests to Gavan Duffy, who is in Ireland, that she might even find a mission in a civil war:

> But in these mere talking times, a poor woman knows not how to turn herself; especially if, like myself, she "have a devil" always calling to her, "March! March!" and bursting into infernal laughter when requested to be so good as to specify whither.

Mrs. Ireland thinks Jane would have liked to have a closer share in Carlyle's writing: 'She would fain have set her little foot on each round

of the ladder beside his, and gone with him in his spirit-flights,' and she is convinced that her heroine needed only opportunity to succeed in literature herself: 'Mrs. Carlyle had a finished and remarkable literary style of her own, and would have made brilliant use of it, had she not from the first been overshadowed by the towering genius and exacting personality of her husband.' And yet this exacting husband writes to her, when she tells him an Egyptian acquaintance has said she ought to write a book about Woman: 'I know not if you mean to take Egypt's advice and write some book. I have often said you might, with successful effect; but the impulse, the necessity, has mainly to come from within.' The impulse was not there. It is true that sometimes she can write beautifully. Take this little passage on her uncle's death:

> It was well he should die thus, gently and beautifully, with all his loving-kindness fresh as a young man's: his enjoyment of life not wearied out: all our love for him as warm as ever: and well he should die in his own dear Scotland, amid quiet, kindly things.

But though apparently quite a number of people suspected her of the authorship of *Jane Eyre*, she had no real creative ability. Geraldine Jewsbury did her best to stimulate her into attempting a novel; she herself had found the contentment of mind which comes from the discipline and the drudgery of sustained composition, and she begs Jane to undertake it too: 'Begin, begin! half your loneliness comes from having no outlet for your energies and no engrossing employment.' But Geraldine pleaded in vain. The impulsive spontaneity of letters suited Jane's volatile temperament better, and her place among the women letter-writers of England is only second to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. How she would have enjoyed the lady who said, 'I really must try and read one of Carlyle's books. His wife's letters are *so* interesting!' It is often claimed that her letters have too much of health, servants, domestic difficulties, and what Mazzini used politely to describe as 'small beings'—that they are in fact, as Jane Austen's friend said of *Emma*, 'too natural to be interesting.' But Jane's talent was, in its small

way, like that of her greater namesake, to transform the commonplace. She herself very much resented that so much of her time should be absorbed by 'the mean perplexities of servants,' and only found the same consolation for it 'which alone makes it possible for one to bear up against old age and death, that it is the *Universal Doom!*' But who can find it dull to read about a housecleaning when the tables and chairs all have 'their legs in the air as if in convulsions'; and if indeed Jane, as she says, thinks, talks, and writes about her servants as much as Geraldine does about her lovers, who can fail to be as interested in the housemaid who was 'like a cow in a flower garden,' as in any Tony Lumpkin; or as outraged by that other who had systematically cheated her, and who was 'a creature you would just as soon have suspected as the Virgin Mary,' as by any Tartuffe?

Whatever her pen touches comes alive. No better description of d'Orsay exists than that in her account of his call on Carlyle in 1839:

A sight it was to make one think the millennium actually at hand, when the lion and the lamb, and all incompatible things should consort together. Carlyle in his grey plaid suit, and his tub chair, looking blandly at the Prince of Dandies; and the Prince of Dandies on an opposite chair, all resplendent as a diamond-beetle, looking blandly at *him*. D'Orsay is a really handsome man, after one has heard him speak and found that he has both wit and sense; but at first sight his beauty is of that rather disgusting sort which seems to be like genius "of no sex." And this impression is greatly helped by the fantastical finery of his dress: sky blue satin cravat, yards of gold chain, white French gloves, light drab great-coat lined with velvet of the same colour, invisible inexpressibles, skin coloured and fitting like a glove, etc., etc. All this, as John says, is "*very* absurd"; but his manners are manly and unaffected, and he convinces one shortly that in the face of all probability, he is a devilish clever fellow. Looking at Shelley's bust, he said, "I dislike it very much; there is a sort of faces who seem to wish to swallow their chins, and this is one of them." He went to Macready after the first performance of "Richelieu," and Macready asked him, "What would you suggest?" "A little more fulness in your petticoat!" answered d'Orsay. Could contempt for the piece have been more politely expressed?

Or take her capacity for creating the atmosphere of a place in the series of letters she writes from Troston rectory in 1842, when she is staying there with the Bullers. The youngest, and stupidest, of the Buller boys, Reginald, had taken orders and had been appointed rector of this small country parish, and his parents were living with him there for the summer. How clearly we watch life as it unrolls itself at Troston! The picturesque, uncomfortable rectory, one day unpleasantly hot, the next reeking with damp and chill; the dawdling, unintelligent existence of the gentry; the daily drive with Mrs. Buller and the nightly game of chess with Mr. Buller; the mouldering church—'anything so like the burial place of revealed religion you have never seen, nor a rector more fit to read its burial service'; the stupidity of Regy, which is so transcendent that whenever he speaks, Jane dare not look at his mother, and feels thankful that his father is so deaf; his conduct of the evening service of Sunday, with a congregation of thirty or forty people —Regy ascending the pulpit and giving out the

JANE WELSH CARLYLE

From a painting by Gambardella in 1843. Photo, Annan, Glasgow.

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psalm 'in a loud, sonorous, perfectly Church of England-like tone,' following this by a sermon, all nonsense, and delivered 'with a noble disdain of everything in the nature of a stop,' and finishing the day with a drive, on which the horse, as it is Sunday, is only *walked* 'on principle.'

Or again, how vividly she creates the atmosphere of the non-arrival of Charles, the brilliant elder brother—Member of Parliament and witty man of fashion. The postponement of his coming day by day, the preparations that go forward cheerfully, the quenching of the atmosphere of glad expectation when his father goes to meet him and comes back alone, the efforts of his parents to appear indifferent and philosophical in their disappointment, Jane's own helpless anger at his thoughtless unkindness to the old couple, her determination to meet him, when he finally does arrive, with a certain armed neutrality, his charm and her 'sublime effort of grumpiness' in an effort to withstand it, and her final capitulation, when, to the disgrace of her originality, she finds herself forced to subscribe to the general opinion

that Charles Buller *is* 'the most agreeable person alive.'

She is the most unaffected of letter-writers: so natural, so gusty, so vivid, with such a vigorous use of words, such an arrowy vitality of phrase for whatever she happens to be dealing with—whether she is sending Carlyle a *cri de cœur* from the valley of the shadow of a household 'earthquake'—'for God's sake don't let John plump in upon me in my present puddlement!'—or describing her own angry misery as 'the mind of me all churned into froth'; or finding uncomplimentary epithets for acquaintances, 'that dumpling of a girl,' 'walking cabbage,' 'old haddock,' 'accursed vegetable'; or illustrating her statements with lively and energetic images. These crop up everywhere. Even when as a girl she is at her most anxious to share Carlyle's tastes, she cannot help thinking that for him to translate *Wilhelm Meister* is like setting a mettled racer to draw a dust-cart, and comments on the absurdities of the story with her never-failing eye for the ridiculous:

That poor little child with St. Vitus's dance! I cannot possibly imagine what is to become of her. So far she seems to play much the same part in the piece which the text does in the generality of sermons: is perpetually recurring without having any visible connection with what goes before and after. How long will it be for God's sake, before she is done learning geography? Do tell me her end, will you? I have a notion she is to die of eating sticks.[8]

When she has an unexpected visitor from Haddington, she spends the day 'milking news from her'; she is so busy that she can only 'take Time by the pigtail' and write in the evenings; she doesn't like breakfasting in bed, because 'it knocks the eye out of one's day'; or she has been seeing the Anthony Sterlings and they 'grate on each other like a couple of files.' Jane loved writing letters, grumbling if she cannot get time to do it in the mornings, and evidently delighting in her gift for intimate, entertaining gossip. But writing was a pastime with her, not a passion. So was

[8] The passage she is commenting on, in Carlyle's translation, is the description of Mignon: "She would never be without some piece of packthread to twist in her hands; some napkin to tie in knots; some paper or wood to chew."

reading. She says it makes her feel young to start learning things, but she has a very quenchable thirst for information, and studies in the same desultory and haphazard way all through her life as she did when she was a girl.

Whether children would have made Jane happier, who shall say? She does not appear to have had any strong maternal instinct, and the modern age does not acquiesce so easily in that facile Victorian conviction that baby fingers can untie all marital tangles, and the cares of children fill all the empty places in every woman's heart. But that congenial occupation of some sort would have made her happier is certain, and it is equally certain that Carlyle cannot be blamed because she did not find it.

VIII

In November, 1865, Carlyle was elected to the Rectorship of Edinburgh University, and the date of his inaugural address was fixed for April, 1866. Though she was far better in spirits than she had been for a very long time, Jane's health made her

decide against accompanying her husband to Scotland for the event, and he started on March 29. 'The last I saw of her,' he wrote in the *Reminiscences*, 'was as she stood with her back to the parlour-door to bid me good-bye. She kissed me twice (she me once, I her a second time). . . .' The address was, as John Tyndall wired to Jane, 'a perfect triumph,' and that evening she went to dinner with the Forsters, entering the room waving the telegram with almost the gaiety of a girl. There followed more than two weeks of pure happiness for her. Carlyle remained in Scotland to pay some visits, but the country was ringing with his praises, expressions of warm personal feeling arrived by every post, and she herself evidently felt a deep and glowing satisfaction, that after a lifetime of effort in which she had played an essential and integral part, that effort and work had been crowned by a nation-wide acclaim. As she said to her aunt Mrs. George Welsh, on receiving the news of the great ovation in Edinburgh: 'Now all my own people will know—now every-

body will know, what a great man my husband is!'

On the afternoon of Saturday, April 21, she drove out in her brougham to Hyde Park. Her little dog, put out to run beside her, was slightly hurt by a passing carriage, and she sprang out to its help. Then she got into the brougham again, took off her bonnet and leaned back in the corner, with her hands in her lap. When the coachman, surprised at getting no orders after driving for another three quarters of an hour, stopped and asked a passing pedestrian to look into the carriage, she was dead. Carlyle took her body to Haddington that she might lie in the same grave as her father, as she had wished. There she was buried, in silence, with no ringing words of hope for that personal immortality which had always seemed to her so much sadder than quiet annihilation, and, at last, unbroken rest. Carlyle wrote some of his love and his grief into her epitaph:

In her bright existence she had more sorrows than are common; but also a soft invincibility, a clearness of discernment, and a noble loyalty of heart, which are rare.

For forty years she was the true and ever-loving helpmate of her husband, and by act and word unweariedly forwarded him, as none else could, in all of worthy that he did or attempted. She died at London, 21st April, 1866; suddenly snatched away from him, and the light of his life as if gone out.

JANE CARLYLE

JANE CARLYLE

I

It is easy enough for the modern critic to diagnose Jane Carlyle's human problem and to point out that her trouble was the very simple one of not having enough to do; but very little study of the social background of her own day makes it equally easy to point out that her problem was almost as insoluble as it was simple. Nothing, indeed, proves better both the justice of many of her complaints about the limitations of her domestic lot, and at the same time the essential originality of her own nature, than a comparison of the personality which emerges from her letters and the accounts of her left by others, with the ideal of womanhood accepted by the public opinion of her time.

There is a little manual, entitled *Instructions in Etiquette for the Use of All*, published in 1847, which gives a useful picture of the training for the

social life of the mid-nineteenth century. The book developed, says its authoress, from questions asked of her by the pupils of a 'considerable school' where she gave instruction in propriety of behaviour, and she hopes that after a perusal of it no young lady will be at a loss as to how to conduct herself in all circumstances. Problem after problem presents itself. How should you pass a person whom you meet on the stairs? How ought you to demean yourself when you accost a relative? If you meet an older person, is it proper to speak first? Should the toes be pointed to the ground when you walk? What apology is necessary if you happen to take another person's seat when he is out of the room? How are you to give commands to servants with ease, mildness, and dignity? What is the most graceful position in which to hold a book when reading? . . . One sees the teasing thoughts rising in the young mind which yearns to act with perfect propriety; but luckily, however ensnaring the problem, there is always the right thing to do, and it only has to be known:

Qt. What movement should be made by a lady who meets a person to whom great respect is due: as, for instance, a bishop?

Ans. If she have only to make him a passing salute, it must be by an elegant bend of the body, rather low, and with a serious countenance, and, in order to make her respect more obvious, she may, if intimate, kiss her hand at the same time. To other gentlemen it is seldom, if ever, proper to kiss the hand. To an intimate friend you may wave your hand, but should not kiss it, as a young gentleman might possibly put an improper construction upon your politeness.

Naturally, the subject of the proper behaviour toward young gentlemen is a fruitful one. It is the only topic with which the talented authoress finds any difficulty. Even she, however, has to confess that no rules of decorum avail with the classes she defines as 'coxcombs' and 'scoundrels': 'For a coxcomb is too full of himself to observe the rules of etiquette, and a scoundrel will break through every rule to accomplish his design.' *Safety first* is the motto in all affairs of this kind. Never stop and speak to any one in the street, whether you know him or not. Apart from the risk of finding

yourself helpless in conversation with a coxcomb or a scoundrel, it is highly improper—

for you attract the attention of all who pass, and expose yourself to their unfavourable remarks, and perhaps even incur their censure. It must always be highly indecorous to stand and hold a conversation in public.

It is equally unseemly to cross the street to speak to a friend, and it must surely have been a very inexperienced miss who inquired innocently:

If, in a place of worship, I should observe a friend whom I have not seen for a long time, would it be proper to move to him?

The answer comes with merited severity:

I should consider it highly improper to greet a person in church; yet, should it be an intimate friend, whom you have not seen for a long time, it may be allowable to greet him at the church door, but not with vivacity.

The young lady's most important social rôle, however, is in the drawing-room. Here, no less than in church or when bowing to a bishop, vivacity is not in place, and the first essential lesson which must be mastered is how to *listen*:

To do this with an appearance of unwearied attention, and as far as possible with an expression of interested feeling on the countenance, is a species of amiable politeness to which all are susceptible. It is peculiarly soothing to men of eminent attainments, and is a kind of delicate deference which the young are bound to pay to their superiors in age.

There is, however, a right and a wrong way to do it, and the demeanour of the perfect listener is by no means easy to master. It must need time and practice to bring it to perfection:

Qt. If in company, a person to whom I owe great deference, accost me, in what position would it be the most graceful, and at the same time, the most respectful, to stand?

Ans. Hold the body perfectly upright, but not stiff. Turn a little to the right or left, with the face completely towards him, looking a little over one shoulder, the arms across the waist, the upper hand open, or the hands clasped and hanging down in front: one foot advanced a little. If the person who speaks is giving directions, incline the body and head gracefully forward. Should the individual present anything, keep the body bent until you have received it, and when you leave him, slide smoothly away, sinking at the same time.

There is a great deal more in the same style, illustrating how a young lady may best make herself agreeable to the opposite sex, and the great social dogma which emerges from all these complicated instructions is the great social dogma which was the basis of the Victorian creed for women—the supreme importance of pleasing men. Together with the great moral dogma of the importance of pleasing God, it is the dominating theme of a whole mass of literature written by women for women on women. The central tenet of the whole structure of social convention is that the will of God and the laws of Nature have placed woman irrevocably in the position of inferiority in which she finds herself, and that all her efforts must be directed toward holding that position in a permanent attitude of graceful acceptance:

> As women, the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength.[1]
>
> The mind of a reasonable man is open to conviction, is impartial and comprehensive; and all these qualities,

[1] *The Daughters of England,* Mrs. Ellis, 1842.

from the very nature of his constitution, he possesses in a higher degree than they can be possessed by women.[2]

A really sensible woman feels her dependence. She is conscious of inferiority and therefore grateful for support.[3]

Mrs. Ellis recommends the daughters of England from their early youth to form the habit of living for Eternity and never for Today; and, indeed, the more we study the picture she and her fellow authoresses paint of the lot of the ideal woman on earth, the more irrefutable do her arguments become for fixing the hopes of her feminine readers on some compensating heaven. For the unmarried woman there is absolutely nothing in this life unless she cultivate 'the zeal for doing good':

On the ground of self-preservation, it behooves every unmarried woman to find some harmless mode of doing active service. . . . There is always some unrelished occupation that may devolve upon a willing coadjutator; in default of every other, the dullest branch of family correspondence will often be gladly conceded.[4]

[2] *The Wives of England,* Mrs. Ellis, 1843.
[3] *Woman,* Mrs. Sandford, 1839.
[4] *The Afternoon of Unmarried Life,* Mrs. A. G. Penny, 1858.

For the married woman naturally the most important matter is the right attitude to her husband. The wary Mrs. Ellis gives a warning early in *The Wives of England* that women should be prepared for discovering faults in men, 'as they are for beholding spots in the sun or clouds in the summer sky'; but in spite of this, there can be no question that a wife's whole existence should be dedicated to flattering the physical and moral superiority of her lord.

> It is unquestionably the inalienable right of all men, whether ill or well, rich or poor, wise or foolish, to be treated with deference and made much of in their own houses. . . . At home it is but fitting that the master of the house should be considered as entitled to the choice of every personal indulgence, unless indisposition or suffering on the part of the wife render such indulgences her due: but even then they ought to be received as a favour, rather than claimed as a right.

Or Charlotte Yonge, in her *Womankind*, pictures the ideal wife as one who spends her time doing for her husband all the things which it is not essential he should do for himself; sparing him all

vexatious detail; exerting herself to share in whatever he likes her to share in; adapting herself to all his moods with ready tact, and finally 'viewing the utmost sacrifice of herself as simply natural.' Even more than his physical and moral superiority must his intellectual superiority be recognized and emphasized. Luckily this is not very difficult:

> Most kindly has it been accorded by man to his feeble sister, that it should not be necessary for her to *talk much* even on his favourite topics, in order to obtain his favour. An attentive listener is generally all that he requires.[5]

But the authoress realizes that there is something of a problem if the wife should be unlucky enough to possess intelligence of her own. The solution, however, is clear. The only thing for a woman to do in such unfortunate circumstances is to concede that the possession of talent in her, when considered in her own character separately and alone, is quite valueless, and that her salvation is to regard it 'only as a means of doing higher homage to her husband, and bringing greater ability to bear upon the advancement of his

[5] *The Women of England*, Mrs. Ellis.

intellectual and moral good.' To attempt to meet him on common intellectual ground is indeed almost criminal folly in a wife, for should a woman *but once* demonstrate that she possesses an equal degree of intelligence to her husband, married happiness is destroyed for the remainder of her life—

or, at any rate, until she can convince him afresh, by a long continuance of the most scrupulous conduct, that the injury committed against him was purely accidental, and foreign alike to her feelings and her inclination.

Intellectual pursuits, then, are obviously not the means by which to widen the limitations of married life. Yet something to alleviate its burdens women must have. When the bloom of young love has worn off, when the nuptial wardrobe has become obsolete, when ennui has succeeded to the excitement of being married, Mrs. Sandford knows that a woman must seek some new impulse to relieve the monotony of domestic life. It must be something, too, which her husband cannot object to or feel jealous of. Luckily, the perfect 'impulse' exists, and '*religion is just what woman*

needs.' No man can object to it, for it has a most 'sober influence,' a most 'domestic tendency,' and the position and habits of woman make piety her obvious pursuit: 'She needs solace and occupation, and religion affords her both.'

It is not surprising that this social code should have permitted Carlyle to visit Lady Harriet Baring for years before she knew of his wife, and that he should apparently regard it as quite a matter of course that his wife should be ignored in that way. It is not surprising that Harriet Martineau should comment so bitterly in her autobiography on the almost incredible vanity of some of the leading men of her day—and certainly not surprising that Bagehot in 1862 should quote 'a splenetic observer' on the stupidity of the average London dinner table: 'Between two pillars of crinoline you eat and are resigned.' Not surprising, either, that Jane Carlyle should remark, 'A little of the "new ideas" might really be introduced into English married life with profit'—for all this was the general public opinion of Jane's day, and during her lifetime almost the only re-

bellion from it by women of the upper classes was their development of novel-writing as a form of genteel occupation. George Eliot wrote an article in *The Westminster Review* in 1856 on the subject of 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists,' and no doubt her account of the imbecilities of matter and manner among her contemporaries is in no way exaggerated. One can well imagine the anger of a real creative artist at these futile attempts in what should be a great literary form, but at the same time one cannot but sympathize with the craving for occupation which called them into being, and with the mild improprieties and religious discussions which were the authoresses' only escape from the repressions and resignations which had been their constant companions from early girlhood. To be a governess or a novelist were the only 'ladylike' ways in which woman could be self-supporting. Social and moral dangers were declared to lurk in every other possibility of employment. She was deliberately trained to be an incompetent amateur at everything she touched. She might write pretty verses or stories, but she must not be

'strong-minded' or she would make herself ridiculous; she might sketch, or paint tables or cover screens, but she must not design anything she could sell for profit; she might strum on the pianoforte and sing sentimental ballads, but a career on the stage or the concert platform was simply the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire, and—

> even choir practice and singing of hymns is often a snare, both in irreverence, conceit and levity of demeanour. Amateur and village concerts are in like manner often innocent delights, but needing great circumspection and instinctive modesty on the lady performers' part to keep all as it should be.[6]

She might potter round the parish, but must not bear any part in official schemes of social reform; she was very suitable in 'the chamber of sickness' of an aged friend or relative, provided she knew nothing whatever about nursing; and, as Mrs. Ellis somewhat naïvely puts it:

> It is a curious anomaly in the structure of modern society, that gentlemen may employ their hours of busi-

[6] *Womankind*, C. Yonge.

ness in almost any degrading occupation, and may be gentlemen still; while if a lady does but touch any article, no matter how delicate, in the way of trade, she ceases to be a lady.

II

In reading the description of his wife in Carlyle's *Reminiscences* one almost has a picture of her as an example of perfect Victorian womanhood—a ministering angel, a May Queen. The poor old man evokes her not only as always young and beautiful, but as set always in scenes of idyllic gentleness and sweetness. She is always his 'bonnie little woman,' his 'little darling,' his 'little Jeannie'—Jane as she frequently was, young and untender, or middle-aged and caustic, never appears, nor do we have even a glimpse of that independence of spirit which made her so very definite a personality, and so very unlike the popular ideal of her day. Not that she did not possess the qualities which Carlyle gives her. No woman, and no man either, for that matter, is lovable without tenderness, and that Jane had the warmest

affections and most generous sympathy is clear both from her own letters and from the comments of those who knew her. She is full of what she calls 'that damned thing, the milk of human kindness.' Any genuine simplicity of heart touches her instantly. Old Mrs. Sterling, with 'the smile in her eyes,' can always soothe her; she can get comfort in a raging headache when her little maid bends over her and rubs a cheek wet with tears against her own, and her estrangement from Anthony Sterling is ended at once when he brings her, as a peace offering, a little shabby old wooden tea-caddy which his mother had always used. She blesses the invention of the photograph, because often, when she is feeling 'in the devil's own humour,' she will catch sight of one of her gallery of old friends and old haunts, which makes a crowd of gentle thoughts rush into her heart and drives the devil out; and she writes to George Eliot that she read *Scenes from Clerical Life* during one of the most physically wretched nights of her life, and found herself beguiled out of her pain by its deep humanity. She is haunted day and

night during the Crimean War by the thought of all the women who must be in agonies of suspense; she tells Neuberg that for any one to have a great and enduring sorrow is enough to make him her friend. And when De Quincey fell ill in Edinburgh—from a diet of seven wineglasses of laudanum a day, and all the game that went bad on the poulterer's hands!—Carlyle and Jane took him into their own house, and he calls her the most angelic woman he ever met on this God's earth. She declares that she has the same attraction for miserable people and for mad people that amber has for straws. To the queer, unbalanced Garnier her instinctive understanding brings real comfort:

Poor fellow! they may all abuse him as they like; but I think, and have thought, and will think well of him: he has a good heart and a good head: only a nervous system all bedevilled, and his external life fallen into a horribly burbled state about him. I gave him tea, and took him a walk, and lent him some music, and soothed the troubled soul of him, and when he went away he said the only civil thing to me he ever said in life: "I am obliged to you, Mrs. Carlyle; you have made me pass one evening pleasantly; and I came very miserable."

Nor is it only to men that Jane can prove her womanly sympathy. Her letters to her friend Mrs. Russell, her cousin Babbie, and her old servant Betty, of Haddington days, all breathe the same spirit of deep and simple loving-heartedness, and Mrs. Oliphant bears witness to it in a little incident in her own life. She describes how Jane came to see her one day when she was half out of her wits with anxiety over her baby, who had just had an attack of convulsions; and how Jane sat by her, so kind and gentle and full of encouragement, as if she had known all about babies; and how that same evening she received a letter from her, saying her husband had been telling her that a sister of his had once had a similar attack as a baby, and never had another, and she wanted Mrs. Oliphant to know of this as soon as possible.

Her affections, indeed, always go hand in hand with an effort to be of practical use to her friends. She is never superficial and windy. 'You must know,' said Geraldine Jewsbury once at a dinner-party, 'we cannot get Jane to care a bit about doctrines.' 'I should think not,' replies one of the guests; 'Mrs. Carlyle is the most *concrete* woman

I have seen for a long time.' She *is* concrete, to her finger tips. When every one else is talking about the young German Plattnauer's disappearance, she sets off to find him, tracks him to the asylum where he has been taken, rescues him from there, and lodges him, insane as he is, in her own house, until his friends can come from Germany. Or again, when she finds a stray child, she will not leave it at the police station, for fear it should be frightened, but takes it home with her, leaving her address with the police, and keeps it fed and amused for five hours. She cannot understand how Lady Ashburton, who spends seven hundred pounds on a ball at Bath House, can be so mean about her village children's party at The Grange —spending only two pounds twelve and sixpence on forty-eight rubbishy presents. 'I should have liked each child to have got at least a *frock* given it,' exclaims Jane, indignantly. She herself is the most generous of women; calls her dress-allowance of twenty-five pounds a year 'a very liberal one,' and when she offers money to her nephew for a holiday, does it simply and directly, 'having

never been able to develop a talent for roundabout in my life.' On meeting Fanny Kemble, she comments: 'She is green-room all over, and with a heart all tossed up into blank verse'; and Jane's own sympathy has a tough fibre in it which is all of a piece with the rest of her personality. It goes hand in hand with disillusion; with that salt of experience which is the salt of dried tears upon the shores of time; with the sadness which has watched so often while youthful Enthusiasm goes ahead right against the stone wall of Reality, and with the knowledge of the inexorable facts of Nature—that life can and often has to be lived without happiness, that love dies, that marriage spoils friendship, so that the vilest squall of a little slobbery red-coloured child becomes more precious music in a young mother's ears than the most eloquent language of a long-tried affection! Carlyle used to say she was like creosote, which conveys something of her wholesome, pungent anti-sentimentalism. She cannot find it in her heart to admire the religious ecstasies of a young cousin's deathbed.

You know my feelings about religious excitement—ecstatics. I cannot regard that as a genuine element in religion. Was not Christ Himself, on the cross, calm, simple? Did He not even pray that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him? Was there ever in the whole history of His life a trace of excitement?

She cares almost nothing, she says, about *what* a man believes compared with *how* he believes it. What she likes about George Eliot's work is that there is no sentimentality in her pathos, no 'twaddle' in her earnestness. The Brontë grim acceptance of suffering seems sometimes an echo of her own very words. But any complacency irritates her. It is easy to see how little affection she has for the amiable woolliness of Emerson and his friends, and how derisive would be her comments on what the newspapers called his 'chaste and beautiful lectures,' or the scene of himself and the Transcendental Club sitting round discussing *What is the Highest Aim?* Weakness irritated her equally. Cowper draws too largely on her pity to be a man according to her heart, and she dismisses the lin-

gering, sad sweetness of the conclusion of the beautiful old ballad *Waly, Waly* as 'barley sugar dissolved in tears.' She hates any kind of false emotion. At a performance of *The Messiah* she finds herself quite in agreement with the religious lady who said that people who believed in their Saviour would not go to hear *singing* about him: 'Singing about him, with *shakes* and white gloves and all that sort of thing, quite shocked my religious feelings—though I have no religion.' And when Geraldine subsides into emotional weeping beside her, it is all Jane can do to keep from shaking her! After the death of her little dog Nero, when a young mother said to her, 'Why not have him stuffed?' she rapped out: 'Stuffed! Would you stuff your baby?' 'Sincerity is my favourite virtue,' she declares, and she applied a shattering common-sense standard to human values. It is true that this practical outlook of hers limited her nature in some obvious ways. She could be very aggressive toward any form of faith which she personally did not share, as we can

guess from a letter of Charlotte Williams Wynne to Mr. Brookfield, on the subject of Jane's anti-Christian tirades at The Grange in 1856:

As to Mrs. Carlyle, I believe she *does* feel irritated at any one's going back to the old paths, who she hoped had left them. She is so restless and uncomfortable in her own convictions that she wishes to persuade others to roam with her, and tries to believe they are *willing* to do so. No one cares to answer her sweeping declamations against Christianity and the Church, and so she thinks one agrees with her, and in consequence every proof of a distinct adherence to certain doctrines annoys her. I believe we all sin in not saying often enough, "I don't agree with you," but it is so much more easy to listen in silence, and I was obliged as the result of my craven-heartedness to have a regular explanation and show her that because I could not, or would not argue, or pass the little time we had together in fending and proving, she was not to suppose that *therefore* I shared her opinion.[7]

She seems incapable of understanding any code of belief outside her own sturdy agnosticism, and the pleasures of speculation and of art are alike wiped

[7] *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle,* C. and F. Brookfield.

out of her universe. She literally 'has no use for' Darwin:

> I do not feel that the slightest light will be thrown on my practical life for me, by having it ever so logically made out that my first ancestor millions and millions of ages back, had been, or even had not been, an oyster.

She enjoys the bite of Thackeray's social satire, or the realism of Trollope, but I do not think she ever appreciates literature on aesthetic grounds. Browning's poetry is 'nothing but a fluff of feathers,' *David Copperfield* 'arrant nonsense,' Jane Austen 'water gruel for the mind.' She has no inkling of the real world of painting or of music or of drama, and the greatest ballet dancer of her day, Taglioni, is simply 'a woman, not even pretty, balancing herself on the extreme point of one great toe, and stretching the other foot high into the air—much higher than decency ever dreamt of.'

But in spite of the prejudices and limitations which her sternly rational nature imposed on her, it gave her a most refreshing and wholesome in-

tolerance of all forms of hypocrisy, and she dislikes equally the artificial mannerisms of Mrs. Montague and the way in which her brother-in-law makes a mere convenience of their house in the name of family affection; the barbarism of a fashionable wedding—all that senseless singing of *Te Deum* before the battle has begun—and the cant of those who say you can find your own happiness in the happiness of others: 'To eat a comfortable beefsteak when one is hungry yields a satisfaction of a much more positive character than seeing one's neighbour eat it.' But most of all, she hates the sentimentality of Miss Geraldine Jewsbury. The portrait of Geraldine which Jane gives in her letters is the most detailed portrait she draws of any woman, and is full of interest both for the view it gives of Jane's character and for its picture of a type wofully misfitted to mid-Victorian England. Carlyle first made Miss Jewsbury's acquaintance in Manchester and was much struck by her intelligence, and Jane, in an impulsive mood, fell into intimate friendship with her at their first meeting, and found too late that she

had entered on a relationship which, for her, had more sour than sweet in it. Geraldine's first visit to Cheyne Row convinces Jane of her mistake. Somewhat against her will and judgment—for she has already had time to note that her new friend is too emotional for her taste, and enjoys rather too much an atmosphere of intrigue—she lets herself be persuaded by Carlyle into asking her for a visit. The course of the visit is described in the letters to Babbie, and illustrates an interesting psychological situation. At close quarters, Jane finds she has nothing but plain hatred for the main qualities in Geraldine's nature, and the more flattering and adoring Geraldine becomes, the more cold and cross and ironic and disobliging is her hostess's response. She writes in all the acuteness of her burning irritation to Babbie, describing pungently Geraldine's flagrant efforts to flirt with every man who comes to the house and her entire insensitiveness to the dislike she inspires in all Jane's men friends. We see her weeping over and caressing a most unwilling Jane, and lying on the hearthrug gazing up into Carlyle's face with a

rapt expression, and refusing to take the broadest hint that she is outstaying her welcome. The atmosphere of these letters is electric with Jane's nervous exasperation, and there is the same spirit in her letters from Manchester when she and Geraldine are staying in the same house there—though there she is particularly outraged by the younger woman's outbursts of 'tiger jealousy' about herself. Poor Geraldine—whom it is impossible not to pity, for she had the misfortune to be without attractiveness, while her whole nature clamoured insistently for a mate—poured out a great deal of her suppressed powers of affection on Jane; and as was inevitable—Jane being what she was—Geraldine's 'lover-like jealousy' simply infuriated her. Sometimes she makes a joke of it—an unkind and not a very good joke to make at a mixed dinner-party:

I set the whole company into fits of laughter the other day, by publicly saying to her after she had been flirting with a certain Mr. —— that "I wondered she should expect me to behave decently to her after she had for a whole evening been making love before my very face to *another man*."

Sometimes, again, Jane gets into what she calls 'a good hearty rage' about it, and refuses to remain in the same room with her friend until she can behave, if not like a woman of sense, at any rate like a gentlewoman. In spite of it all, though, Jane interests herself in finding a publisher for Geraldine's novel *Zoe*, which she regards as 'a wonderful book,' and the next incident in the history is the immense popular success of the new authoress. *Zoe*, which deals with the theme of the love of an eighteenth-century Catholic priest for a beautiful woman, and with his loss of his faith and renunciation of his vows and subsequent death, was regarded as immensely daring. The publishers (Chapman & Hall) even consulted Jane about the advisability of proceeding with the publication, as some people who had seen the manuscript considered it 'a most dangerous book, shaking the foundations of all sound doctrine.' One imagines that if it had had a contemporary Anglican hero instead of an eighteenth-century Catholic one, it might have proved an earlier *Robert Elsmere*. Anyhow, everybody read it and

discussed it. It was attacked fiercely by the conventional for its 'indecency,' but Mazzini and Erasmus Darwin and Arthur Helps all thought it first-rate, and Jane's raw young Manchester nephew finds reading it 'constitutes a new era in his spiritual existence.' On her next visit to Jane a year later, Geraldine finds her position very much changed. Her hostess comments indeed sarcastically to Babbie on the attitude of society toward individuals, declaring that whereas formerly every one professed to find Geraldine a bore, because she was simply an unmarried woman of thirty or so, now, because she has written a book, 'above all a book accused of immorality (quite a new sort of distinction for a young Englishwoman), there is no house I visit at where the people would not *thank* me for giving them a sight of her and an opportunity of *exhibiting* her to their friends.'

But meanwhile a more personal interlude had been playing itself out. On February 26, 1845, Jane writes to Babbie on the subject of the much-discussed *Zoe:*

The oddest thing of all is that Geraldine seems to me in a fair way of getting a Husband by it!!!—Q. in a fit of distraction took to writing her letters of criticism about it which have led him already further than he thought—and she—has taken or is fast taking "a fit" to him—and both I can perceive contemplate a lawful catastrophe. *There* is encouragement to young ladies to write *improper* books.

She writes again on March 8, telling Babbie the sequel to this prelude. There have apparently been general hysterics about it among Geraldine's family and friends. Q. went to Manchester to see her—'she had already accepted him or to speak more accurately I believe offered herself to him on paper!!'—but her brother disapproved highly of the match, her friend Mrs. Paulet thinks them both mad to contemplate it, while Geraldine herself, who starts off in the rôle of Heroine, soon appears 'less like a heroine than a bladder with the wind let out of it,' and writes frenziedly, 'Oh, write, *can* I break off; for I am frightened out of all love'; to which Jane replies curtly, 'Only fools marry for the sheer sake of keeping their promise.' By April 5, the whole affair is

blown up, but Jane is sceptical of its having taught the heroine any sense. 'I am greatly mistaken if Geraldine, so soon as she finds the man takes no further notice of her, do not be at him again. . . . Her conduct through the affair has been that of an arrant fool, tho' she should have written not one, but twenty clever books.' All Jane's sympathies are with Q., who, besides the mortification of being involved in a broken engagement when the engagement itself was really not of his seeking, 'has a constitutional tendency of blood to the head which when anything excites him violently produces a sort of *brain-fever*.' Jane reports further that Geraldine has gone to Paris with her brother and a new friend, an educated Egyptian, and that no doubt she will soon be involved in an affair with *him*. This is precisely what happens, but unluckily she introduced the Egyptian to Jane, and it must have been humiliating indeed for poor Geraldine when he forthwith started a correspondence with her attractive married friend instead of with herself. Jane describes unsympathetically enough what must have been an

almost painful scene when they were both staying with the Paulets outside Manchester later that summer. 'Who can this be from?' said Jane at breakfast one morning, taking up a letter in a strange handwriting. On which Geraldine, turning first pale and then red, blurts out, 'I can tell you; it is from the Egyptian, and why he should have written to *you* instead of to *me* is a mystery I cannot pretend to fathom.' 'And now can you tell me who *that* is from?' said Jane, handing her another note whose writing puzzled her. 'Yes, it is from Robertson.' Jane then comments: 'The whole of us burst into laughter—such a complication,' which presumably can only mean that the lover of the episode in the spring, whose identity is concealed in the published letters, was Robertson, the sub-editor of *The Westminster Review*, who appears, as a slightly disagreeable personality, throughout all Jane's correspondence.

The finale of Geraldine's attempted affair with the Egyptian was what one would expect from this incident. She refused to believe that he was not really at heart her devoted admirer, and did her

best to interest him in herself in person and by letter. But in an undated letter of hers (probably early in 1846) she confesses to Jane the sorry end of it all. He has written her a letter in which he owns 'that the correspondence has grown to be a terrible bore to him,' and that he has long lost any hope that they may be more to each other. Besides, it would shock his Mohammedan friends if he took a European wife, and 'be a scandal to the respectable and numerous English with whom he is connected.' Geraldine declares that discovering the truth of his faithlessness has nearly frozen her to death, and she concludes disconsolately, 'I don't think I ever shall have luck with my lovers.' Jane thinks the same, and adds tartly to Babbie, 'which is a pity—as her heart seems set on being married to any sort of male biped who could maintain her.' But for a short time that summer Jane had cause to change her mind about the general contemptibility of her friend's character. It is at the onset of that long breakdown of her health and spirits, which lasted for the best part of twenty years, that we find the one passage in the letters

which shows her in a mood of genuine appreciation of Geraldine:

Geraldine will not hear of my going tomorrow, nor do I, myself, feel in any desperate haste to leave her. This noiseless, well-ordered little house of hers—the very pink of Martha-Tidyism—is so calming-down, and herself so good and *quiet* and *sensible!* I should like to see the perfectly *rational proper* Mrs. Ellis [8] of a woman that could have managed so well with me as this poor little authoress of a questionable *Zoe* has done in these days. People who are at ease in Zion—I myself when I have been so to a certain extent—may have found Geraldine very teasing and absurd—but let one be ill—suffering—especially *morbidly* suffering—and then one knows what Geraldine is! All the intelligent sympathy and real practical good that lies in her.

Carlyle said Jane never forgot all that Geraldine was to her then, but one is bound to own that her memory of it appears to become a little hazy whenever she has occasion to mention Geraldine's luckless pursuit of men. Jane had been lively enough in her own youth, and engrossed enough in her flirtations, moreover, to

[8] Authoress of *The Women of England,* etc.

have made her a little more sympathetic. But then, she had been a successful flirt, so she felt all the contempt of the success for the failure: her emotions had always been well in check to her wits, whereas poor Geraldine was always helplessly at the mercy of each new passion which consumed her. She is equally bitter on the very mild unconventionalities of Geraldine's novels, declares that though she doesn't mind plain speaking, Geraldine's want of reserve is really 'coming it too strong,' and that it is an exposure of her whole mind naked as before the Fall, without so much as a fig-leaf of conformity remaining. She writes to Forster in 1848, on the subject of Geraldine's second novel, *The Half Sisters:*

> This is worse than anything in *Zoe* to my judgment, in fact perfectly disgusting for a young Englishwoman to write. . . . I would not have such stuff *dedicated to me* as she proposed, for any number of guineas. But I am done with counselling her—her tendency towards the unmentionable is too strong for *me* to stay it.

The book appeared, however, with the joint dedication to Jane and Mrs. Paulet, which—and in-

deed the fact that the two women remained life-long friends—goes to prove the truth of Jane's contemptuous remark, 'There is no quarrelling with that creature.' Geraldine's letters to Jane exist still and were published (in what one suspects to be a very mutilated form, and with an introduction which is a masterpiece of misstatement) in 1892, but before her own death she destroyed all Jane's letters to her—'as a matter of conscience,' the introduction assures us. If, however, Jane wrote *to* her as she wrote *of* her, one can quite imagine that Geraldine would not wish the correspondence to survive, especially after the picture she had given Mr. Froude of the untarnished intimacy between herself and Mrs. Carlyle! Jane had no compunction about dipping her pen in a mixture of vinegar and vitriol when she felt inclined to, and from her comments to her other correspondents it is clear that she very frequently felt so inclined toward poor Geraldine Jewsbury.

Indeed, like all concrete natures, Jane could be as hard as she was sound and solid. Carlyle found

it out very early in their courtship and made his comment: 'It is the earnest, affectionate, warm-hearted, enthusiastic Jane that I *love;* the acute, sarcastic, clear-sighted, derisive Jane I can at best but *admire.*' Jeffrey had taken her to task over the same thing: 'Why should you have so many more confident opinions than I have . . . and above all, why have you contempt for those whose tastes and opinions differ from yours?' While Caroline Fox writes in a surprised tone after a visit to Cheyne Row, 'I don't think she roasted a single soul or even body.' Old Sterling used to say that she would be a vast deal more amiable if she were not so damnably clever, and certainly Jane might address the Jane Bennets of this world as Elizabeth did, and declare, 'You need not be afraid that I shall encroach upon your privilege of universal goodwill.' But the people who see only the best in everybody are seldom the best company; and most of us, I fancy, would rather pass an afternoon with Jane Carlyle or Elizabeth Bennet, for all their prickly sarcasms, than with Jane Bennet, for all her sweetness. We would

like to be told about the dinner at the H——s: 'Dining there is like seasickness; one thinks at the time one will never never encounter it again; and then the impression wears off, and one thinks *perhaps* one's constitution has undergone some change and this time it will be more bearable.' We would like to be that visitor who was surprised at the effusiveness of his welcome, and who was asked when he was going away if he realized why he had been so warmly welcomed. 'When the bell rang, both Carlyle and I said, "It's Emerson," and when you were shown in instead we couldn't help expressing our feeling of relief.'[9] We would like to listen to her comment on John Sterling: 'People who are so dreadfully "devoted" to their wives are so apt, from mere habit, to get devoted to other people's wives as well'; or to hear about the lady who had outstayed her welcome and was quite a bug in her habits—there was no dislodging her; or that other lady who had lost her wits but had 'sustained no

[9] 'Carlyle's Life in London,' G. S. Venables, *Fortnightly Review,* November, 1884.

great loss, for they were never anything to speak of'; or the two Americans who came and broke up a pleasant party, and 'never spoke a word but sat with their eyes fixed on Carlyle as if they had paid their shillings at the door' (the type, no doubt, who, as Carlyle said, did nothing except spit the fire out); or John Carlyle waiting to see his way clearly and not even taking the trouble to wipe his spectacles; or George Eliot, with her look of Propriety personified, and, oh, so *slow!*— or Mrs. Leigh Hunt, dropping in to borrow anything and everything from a cupful of porridge to a brass fender; or Browning, asked to put the kettle back on the fire and depositing it on the hearthrug, while he went on with his conversation; or Tennyson at The Grange—

> going about asking everybody if they like his *Maud*— and reading *Maud* aloud—and talking of Maud, Maud, Maud, till I wished myself far away among people who only read and wrote prose or who neither read nor wrote at all.

'A cross between John Knox and a gipsy' is what W. E. Forster called Jane, and if her oc-

casional fierce prejudices and pruderies and reserves remind one of her Calvinistic forebears, all her attractive independencies and vagaries of nature speak of her gipsy blood. She has plenty of physical courage, and when the house has been burgled while she is alone in it, instead of sending for Carlyle, she sleeps with two loaded pistols at her bedside. She has the same mettlesome spirit in the general conduct of her life. Almost all the reviews and opinions of the original edition of *The Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* deplore her unconventionalities. 'What a coarse woman!' exclaims Mrs. Charles Darwin, 'though only to a husband'; while one American reviewer says the letters reveal some one 'who, whatever else she was, was manifestly no lady,' and another thinks 'she lacked refinement in many ways that tend to make woman respected as well as admired. She smoked tobacco; swore and used unseemly words; had no faith in things seen or unseen.' All this is strictly true. She would certainly have echoed Carlyle on revealed religion:

Thirty-nine English Articles,
Ye wondrous little particles,
Did God shape his Universe really by you?

and it is doubtful if a refined mid-Victorian lady of forty-eight would have climbed the six-foot wall of Haddington churchyard, or whether one of fifty-two would have behaved as she did when she found 'Scotch-looking' snow in the streets on coming home from a theatre, and is so 'drunk' with the sensation that she runs along with her bonnet hanging on her back, one minute taking a slide and the next lifting a handful of snow to eat it! It was not refined to make a friend of her dressmaker; or to declare that, whether a divorce case went for or against an acquaintance of hers, she intended going to see her and sympathize with her; or to try and break the banality of conversation at a tea-party by throwing her cup and saucer into the fire; or to stop a barking dog by sending a note to the owner with a bottle of whisky, requesting that the dog might be quieted by being made drunk; or, before marriage, too, to send a kiss, via Carlyle, to Irving's baby, saying at the

same time, 'I would not do it myself for five guineas. Young children are such nasty little beasts.' And it was specially improper to delight in outraging 'delicate femalism' by lunching alone at a restaurant, by riding on the top of an omnibus, and on being accosted in the street, to say 'Idiot!' and pass on without any feminine shrinking horror. Jane, too, certainly swore and used unseemly words. 'Why in the Devil's name don't you write to me?' she exclaims to a neglectful friend. 'Not one word more will I write for her, by God,' is her comment when she is tired of sending messages from her mother; on a dull visit in the country she heads her letter 'Hell' in place of address; and she is not sure that she won't have a seal with 'Damnation' on it, as being the shortest and most expressive motto she can think of.

III

Creative ability in the arts has always belonged in far greater proportion to men than to women. But there is, nevertheless, one facet of creative

ability which has belonged as a special province to women throughout the ages—the artistry of personal relationships. Jane Carlyle had only a small literary gift, but the genius for creating a rare human atmosphere, for kindling a commonplace social environment into something living and glowing, for communicating pleasure to those around her by a radiant personality—all this she possessed all her life long.

She never had conventional beauty, and her youthful good looks soon left her, but she was always that 'very elegant creature' that Harriet Martineau found her in her early thirties and Anne Thackeray in her early sixties. Always dressed with distinction and individuality (she refused to wear a crinoline), always slim, upright, alert, with a fragile body and a delicately cut colourless face, abundant dark hair never touched with grey, and lustrous, expressive black eyes which never lost their tenderness or their vivacity. 'Full of intellect and kindness blended gracefully and lovingly together' is how Gavan Duffy described her to his wife. David Masson says there

JANE WELSH CARLYLE, ÆT. 54

From a photo by R. Tait, June, 1855. Reproduced by permission of Mr. Reginald Blunt.

was something in the brilliance and mockery of her expression which always reminded him of portraits of the young Voltaire. And as she says herself, the women most truly loved are rarely regular beauties. Her manner had something in it far more potent than faultless features, something which made the Countess Pepoli reply to Plattnauer when he remarked that Count Krasinski was preposterously fond of Mrs. Carlyle, 'Oh, all *the men* are that!' Jane calls this 'slightly splenetic,' but it was mainly true. Not quite, however. Charles Darwin writes to his future wife, Miss Emma Wedgwood, in 1838, that he has been to the Carlyles and likes Thomas, partly because of his brilliant talk, partly because he had said that 'a certain lady was one of the nicest girls he had ever seen'; but that though it is high treason to say it, he cannot think that Jenny is 'either quite natural or ladylike.' But then Jane found him 'mortally dull,' so they were quits! Mrs. Brookfield, at a later date, reports that some people think her 'very peculiar,' and that she tells her stories at too great length and in too Scotch an

accent; but she owns that the Mrs. Carlyle enthusiasts do not agree, and that the critics are often disappointed *raconteurs* who have been unable to hold the stage! The general opinion is that of Gavan Duffy and his two companions on his first call, who all think she is one of the most natural, unaffected, and fascinating women they have ever met, and are not sure that they would not rather cultivate her acquaintance than that of her husband; or that of the Frenchman, A. M. Rio, whom Jane received in Carlyle's absence, and with whom she at once had a conversation so real and friendly that he writes with genuine disappointment to a friend, 'I very much regretted an engagement to spend the evening elsewhere'; or of poor bewitched Froude himself, that she was the most brilliant and interesting woman he had ever fallen in with.

It is in the sitting-room at Cheyne Row, 'our long, dimly-lighted, perfectly neat and quaint room,' that we think of her most. At her happiest perhaps when she was alone there, doing exactly what she liked, having her own friends about her,

and not having to consider Carlyle's comfort and convenience, as she inevitably did when he was at home; or having to accommodate herself to her friends' comfort and convenience, as she inevitably did if she were staying away as a guest. Her tastes in company are catholic. To the end of her life she kept her appetite for new experiences and for making new friends. W. E. Forster found her at forty-six 'like a girl in her delight at new scenes and situations,' and at forty-nine she can be glad she was persuaded to get an evening dress 'cut down to the due pitch of indecency,' and to go to the ball at Bath House, 'not from any pleasure I had at the time, being past dancing and knowing but few people,—but it is an additional idea for life to have seen such a party.' When a schoolmistress writes and asks her if she could get a position as 'assistant to a literary lady,' saying optimistically that she thinks such a relationship would give her 'clear ideas and broad knowledge,' Jane replies:

> Believe a woman older than yourself. . . . There is as little *nourishing* for an aspiring soul in literary society

as in any civilized society one could name! And for "clear ideas" and "broad knowledge" they are not secreted in any corner of life, but lie in all life, for whoever has faculty to appreciate them.

But though she has beloved friends in all walks of life, aristocrats, business men, and maid-servants, she knows what literary and artistic society can give—that extra dose of vitality and spirit which intelligent bohemianism can somehow achieve without self-consciousness. The atmosphere which made her comment on a party at Mrs. Macready's, where 'the excellent Dickens' and 'the excellent Fuz' (Forster) had performed prodigies in conjuring feats to the huge delight of the children, and a dance had followed, in which 'the gigantic Thackeray' had capered like a Maenad, and the whole thing had risen 'into something not unlike the rape of the Sabines,' while she had talked 'the maddest nonsense' all evening with Dickens and Forster and Thackeray and Maclise:

After all—the pleasantest company, as Burns thought—*are* the *blackguards!*—that is, those who have

just a sufficient dash of blackguardism in them to make them snap their fingers at ceremony and "all that sort of thing"—I question if there was as much witty speech uttered in all the aristocratic, conventional drawing-rooms throughout London that night as among us little knot of blackguardist literary people who felt ourselves above all rules and independent of the universe!

It is all the lightness and freshness of mind she is talking about here which made her companionship what it was—so absorbing that W. E. Forster could say of her that she was one of those few women whom a man could talk to all day, or listen to all day, with equal pleasure. That she was a wonderful listener is obvious—no woman charms men who is not that; but that in her intimate talk she was as well worth listening to, no one who reads her letters can possibly doubt. She was no George Eliot, and though the gist of her opinions on God, Immortality, and Duty was probably very similar, one cannot imagine her entertaining her guests with discussions in which 'she pronounced with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the

second, and yet how peremptory and absolute was the *third*.' There was nothing overwhelming or sibyllic about Jane. She had the real genius for friendship, the faculty for making every one feel more himself for being with her. When Carlyle protests that people bore him so soon, she knows the reason at once; 'with you they are always balancing themselves like Taglioni, on the point of their moral and intellectual great toe; with me they are not afraid to stand on the little "broad basis" of their own individuality, such as it is.' As to her intellectual opinions, no doubt they were mainly second-hand reflections of those of Carlyle. She says herself that women are such imitating creatures that no woman can hinder herself from taking something of the colour of the man she lives beside all her life; and when she reports herself arguing with a clergyman about his sermons, she concludes: 'As for the arguments, I got them, of course, all out of you!' But Jane was wise enough never to compete on the same conversational ground with her husband, and his friends came to her for something they could not get

from him. On his first absence from London she writes to him: 'I had some private misgivings that your men would not mind me when you were not here . . . but it is quite the reverse.' Indeed, the maid finds visitors are such a habit that she insists on bringing up extra teacups every evening, as 'the gentlemen will be sure to be coming in.' Jane has left us full-length portraits of some of 'the gentlemen' who came most often to Cheyne Row—her 'lovers,' as she calls them. Mazzini is the most famous name among them, and toward Mazzini Jane seems to have felt more of the maternal instinct than she felt for any other of her intimates. She has the maternal longing to protect and care for him, and at the same time the maternal exasperation at what she regards as his crazy ambitions, and the maternal incomprehension of the tenacity and reality of his convictions. One gets rather the impression from her comments that the idea of a free Italy is just a foolish whim which Mazzini insists on holding to, just a bee in his bonnet whose buzzing makes him sometimes a little tiresome to his sensible friends like herself.

But her irritation over what she calls his 'reckless folly' and what she regards as his blind hopes are largely founded on anxiety for his personal safety: the fact that she realizes he is one of those men 'born to make a martyr of himself' rouses all the protective instincts in her. She has the same feelings about his health and is furious that she is helpless to look after him when he is ill: 'helpless because the accursed conventionalities of this world make it *disgraceful* to go and nurse one's dearest friend if he happened to be a young man.' But it is not Mazzini the impassioned patriot whom we meet in her letters; it is Mazzini the shy, lovable, friendly human being. Mazzini coming to wish her a happy New Year, with drops of sleet hanging from his moustache—or withstanding the blandishments of Lady Harriet at an evening party, or frightened at Geraldine's advances, or solemnly discussing Love with Mrs. Paulet, or describing his growing popularity in radical society, where the ladies vie with each other in sending him flowers, working for his bazaar and writing verses about him. There was no element

of flirtation in Jane's relationship with Mazzini, though that her friend Elizabeth Pepoli (the middle-aged Scotch Miss Fergus, who had married the young Italian refugee Count Pepoli) thought there was is evident from a delicious little scene of comedy Jane describes, in 1844. She and Mazzini were interrupted by the Countess, who has come to inquire after Jane's health:

"But I see," said she with a peculiar look and tone, "that you are *quite well* now." The fact was Mazzini and I had just been regaling ourselves with wine, figs and gingerbread, and when the rap came to the door I bade him put away the glasses and he put them into *my writing desk!* So that when she opened the door we both presented an unusual appearance of discomposure, which Elizabeth . . . interpreted doubtless into "a delicate embarrassment." Elizabeth to have been always *virtuous*, as I am sure she has been, has really a curious incapacity of comprehending the simplest *liaison* between man and woman. She would not sit down—but having quite *looked us thro' and thro'* (as she thought) went home "to write letters."

Friends often found Jane and Mazzini sitting with their feet on the fender, talking about 'things

in general.' No doubt many of those conversations were personal and intimate, or Jane would not have later chosen Mazzini as the man to whom she went for advice in her emotional distress; but they must often have been as gay as in the scene where Erasmus Darwin joined them in 'a confidential little fireside party':

> Mazzini said that Sismondi had at one time been "nearly *lapidated*." "Nonsense," said I, "you should say *stoned*, there is no such word as lapidated in that sense." "Let him alone," said Darwin, "he is quite right, lapidated is an excellent word." . . . "But are you sure?" asked Mazzini with the greatest simplicity—"in the Bible, for instance, does not *She call it lapidated* in speaking of St. Stephen?" This femalizing of the Bible so delighted Darwin that he gave a sovereign to the school.[10]

Erasmus Darwin (older brother of Charles) held a different place in Jane's affections. 'The likest thing to a brother I ever had in the world,' she says, and we see him bringing her hyacinths in pots when she is ill; hearing Mazzini say she

[10] The school for Italian exiles founded by Mazzini.

ought to wear a shawl in the house, making no comment at the time, but returning next day with 'an immense gauze-looking shawl of white lambs-wool'; or interrupting a speculative discourse to remark that she looked as if she needed to go to Gunters and have an ice. Jane will allow him up to her bedroom when she is ill, and she teases him with no embarrassment, as she reports to Babbie:

> The garters! I have never thanked you for them—ah—but they have passed away from me! Only think, I gave them to Darwin and said you worked them for him and the poor man blushed up to the eyes and so will you at hearing of it—never mind, I put it all to rights; after I told him you had worked them for me who cannot wear that sort and that I could not have them wasted on anybody *you* did not care for, he declared he should be delighted to wear them!

Other acquaintances declared that she used to shake hands with Darwin in a way as if to show all others how little she cared for them; but if Jane cared in any way beyond friendship for any of that Cheyne Row circle of her late thirties and early forties, it was not for Darwin or for Maz-

zini, but for the French exile Godefroi Cavaignac. Naturally she says nothing of it directly, but one can distinguish an element almost of worship in her affection for that very noble patriot, which gives a strange note of suppressed exaltation to Jane's voice when she speaks of hearing from him or of writing to him, and a strange sense of tension and strangled emotion to that scene in which Robertson spoke to her unexpectedly of Cavaignac's death. It was in 1849, and Robertson was saying that he wished to bring Louis Blanc to call on Jane:

"I am sure you will like him—he was talking to me today of many things that would have interested even *you*. It was in *his* arms, he tells me, that Godefroi Cavaignac died!"—I started as if he had shot me—the thing took me so by surprise . . . and Robertson was watching the effect of his words. I had my boa, gloves, reticule, etc., in my lap—I flung them all violently on the floor—why, I don't know—I could not help it!

Robertson picked them up, looking at her inquiringly, and Jane left the room, feeling as if

she could kill him, she says. Her comment to Babbie is:

> I believe Robertson said that about Godefroi, in the devilish intention of watching its effect on me—I know he has been heard to speculate on my intimacy with him. Well! let him draw his inferences—it is no disgrace to *any* woman to be accused of having loved Godefroi Cavaignac, the only reproach to be made me is that I did not love him as well as he deserved. But now he is dead I will not *deny him* before all the Robertsons alive!

And if Cavaignac was the man for whom Jane cared most deeply among her friends, there is no difficulty in recognizing the one who cared most obviously for her. It was old Sterling, nicknamed The Thunderer, from his habit of writing denunciatory leading articles in *The Times*. His wife and both his sons—Anthony, of whom we get a disagreeable impression throughout the letters, and John, charming, but not a very clear-cut personality, whose life Carlyle wrote—were all close friends of Jane, but it is the figure of the old

man which stands out most boldly from her writing. Her treatment of him, indeed, illustrates in itself the whole of Jane's nature. There is no one about whom she can be more bitter. His blustering egotism and aggressiveness used to irritate her past bearing. He would presume on his age and his practical kindness to her in lending her his carriage very frequently, to behave to her like a jealous young lover, and she showed no mercy to such outbreaks. When he tries to force his way into Gambardella's studio to see her picture, she allows him to be dismissed with the utmost rudeness from the door; and when, uninvited, he interrupts a *tête-à-tête* between herself and Mazzini, and makes some comment on her company, she does not spare him:

He permitted himself to utter an impertinence, whereupon my humour being already jarred I told him that he was an old fool and had better get about his business—not exactly *in those words*, but that was the purport. So with a look that Mazzini said was like that of a wild beast—I was not heeding for my part how he looked—he started up and took what was intended to

sound—as an everlasting farewell! "Will he come back?" said Mazzini. "Yes," said I, "the day after to-morrow at furthest—he will rage out today—sulk tomorrow—and come back on his knees (figuratively speaking) the day after"—and so it was—or rather he did better, for he sent me the carriage yesterday with a touching message that he was too ill to write or go out—but sent me the carriage for my own use—of course I sent it back again unused—for I do not forgive him all at once in these cases.

She is equally caustic about his stinginess in money matters, giving a terrible picture of the cheap lodgings he provides her with when she is his guest in the Isle of Wight, and declaring, when he presents her with two handkerchiefs and gives her cake and 'cherry bounce' at a confectioner's, that she thinks such munificence must be a sign that he is going to die! While her comment is as biting as it well could be on his remark that he had spent the night wondering how it was that in spite of Mrs. Paulet's charms, 'one nevertheless could not fall in love with her':

The reason I should have fancied plain enough—and to lie simply in "one's" seventy-four years of age!—

with the additional fact that having just lost by death the noblest of sons "one" might have something else to think of than falling in love with other men's wives—but he flattered himself to have found a more comforting solution of the *grande mistero* and what think you it was?—"her face was too exclusively intellectual!!!" Oh, the thrice-grained goose!

But he has only to be in genuine trouble for her heart to go out to him in the most genuine tenderness. When his wife dies, she hastens to him at once—'I was sure he would be better for getting a good cry with me—which he had—with his head on my shoulder, poor old fellow—but at such a moment he was welcome to make any use of me that he pleased.' But here too her patience is soon worn out, and she tires of her compassion when she finds that she has taken on herself the exclusive occupation of being dry-nurse to this 'great big obstreperous infant of an old Sterling,' that he is going to take advantage of her gentleness to demand unlimited sympathy, and that he is simply 'prolonging his wailing' so that he shall have her unquestioning attention. She continues,

therefore, to treat him with a mixture of kindness and contempt until he is really ill, and then again her tenderness blots out all thought of his follies. 'Ah, but he is not laughable any more,' she exclaims as she describes his holding out of his arms to welcome her, the loss of all his old bluster in courteous gentleness, and his pathetic whisper as he points to his head, 'It is *here* that all is over with me! Gone, gone, gone!' while the tears ran down his old cheeks. 'Almost down mine too,' says Jane, 'for he said that, not as he used to say such things, but with the simplicity of truth.'

We can guess from her letters how she entertained 'the gentlemen,' and how she made herself beloved of them, for the same qualities which make her writing what it is must have shone through all her personal companionship. Even old Mrs. Carlyle used to say that getting a letter from Jane made her feel 'as light as a feather all day'; and her gift for gossiping about the daily round and the common task, and the people she meets as she goes about it, makes it a sheer delight to hear about a host of circumstances and characters

never very distinguished anyhow and long since crumbled into completely undistinguished dust. She is there in the centre of it all herself, in a multitude of occupations and situations, scribbling about them all so busily that when night comes she is often so tired with writing that she can hardly put one foot before the other! We see her in the great red bed (still at Cheyne Row) in which she transacted so many headaches, so many influenzas; lying sleepless in misery 'pitted against chaos' and coming off second best, or listening to a barking dog until the whole universe seemed one great dog-kennel, or feeling as if death were grasping at her heart. We catch her in a moment of self-pity, exclaiming, 'When I look at my white white face in the glass, I wonder how any one can believe I am fancying'; or 'looking up, as they say of the funds'; or on the way to convalescence—'not quite well yet—at least, I am still wearing signals of distress, a nightcap and shawl—partly, I confess, from a secret persuasion that these equipments render my appearance more interesting'; or recuperating in the quiet of

Ramsgate: 'A brass band plays all through our breakfast and the brass band is succeeded by a band of Ethiopians, and that again by a band of female fiddlers! and interspersed with these are individual barrel-organs, individual Scotch bagpipes and individual French horns!' One day she tells Bess Stodart that she is looking more captivating than usual, and that she is praying Venus that her looks will last till she gets to town; and on another she is describing to Babbie how her new portrait by Gambardella gives her the look of a rather improper female doing a sort of St. Anthony's ecstasy, and doing it not well. We see her enjoying 'the grand happiness of family intercourse—leave to be as ugly and stupid and disagreeable as one likes!'—eluding a dull dinner-party by wrapping a piece of flannel round her neck and sending a message to say she has a sore throat, or reporting another party as pleasant, 'which means that I myself was appreciated'; or riding up the Malvern Hills with old Sterling, 'each on a live donkey! Just figure it! with a Welsh lad whipping us from behind; for they were the slowest of donkeys, though named, in

defiance of all probability, *Fly* and *Lively*'; or listening to a Russian gentleman who had translated *Heroes and Hero-Worship* and who poured out rhapsodies about Carlyle in 'the frightfulest English' till both he and she were 'all in a perspiration'; or making friends with Mrs. Macready over Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook:*

> She asked me how I liked Harriet's book. I answered "How do *you* like it?" She made wide eyes at me and drew her little mouth together into a button. We both burst out a-laughing, and that is the way to get fast friends.

Or meeting the faithless George Rennie—the first time since her marriage—and feeling 'within an ace of fainting,' though she no longer entertains a 'particle of tenderness' for him; or at Troston rectory putting on a cap and woollen shawl, 'those infallible symptoms of a fire-needing human being,' in a vain effort to hint to Regy Buller that she is cold; or being wept over by Lord Houghton and Forster as they clasp her in their arms on her recovery from her illness in 1864; or being comforted when she has an outrageous pim-

pple on her nose, by Anthony Sterling bursting out, "Damn your nose! As if anybody really attached to you could love you an atom less if you were all covered over with smallpox!'

As vivid as these pictures of the scenes she lives in are those of the moods she lives through. As she drives along leafy Dorsetshire lanes on a quiet evening, she feels as if she were reading about herself in a Miss Austen novel; and she is part of a whole drama of creation at the farm at Craigenputtock:

> Did you ever watch any hatching thing? If not, you can form no adequate conception of the hopes and fears which at present agitate my breast. I have a goose sitting on five eggs—a rather flighty sort of character—quite a *goose of the world* in fact, who from time to time drives me to the brink of despair by following her pleasures whole hours with the other geese, to the manifest danger of cooling her eggs. I hover about the nest during these long absences with a solicitude quite indescribable, and it will end, I believe, in my sitting down on the eggs myself. My turkey again sits like a very vegetable; but she is a born idiot, and I dread that the offspring will be all creatures of weak intellect also.

In a gay mood she fetches a supply of French novels from the London library, and 'having still however some sense of decency remaining' reports that she signed in the ledger for them *Erasmus Darwin;* in a moment of depression she is feeling 'soaked to the very heart' with London rain, or 'all stewed into mush' from listening to a popular preacher, while in a more spirited frame of mind she has a set-to with her uncle on the subject of church-going. He comes to her room on Sunday morning to ask if she is coming:

"No, I have no thought of it."

"And why not?" (*Crescendo.*)

"Because your minister is a ranting jackass, that cracks the drum of one's ears."

"And what has that to do with going to a place of worship?"

"Nothing whatever; but it has a great deal to do with staying away from a place that is not of worship."

Or, again, she confesses her nervousness, not lest, as one lady fears, Carlyle may address his lecture audience as Gentlemen and Ladies, but lest he may address them 'Fool-creatures come

here for diversion'; and confides that she is wondering what is the best way to make him end at the right time—perhaps to have a lighted cigar laid on the desk as the clock strikes four? Carlyle, indeed, is there as vividly as herself—with the pellet of cotton-wool, with which he has stopped up his ears, generally sticking at the end of some stray hair; or in uncongenial company looking like a chained tiger; or relying on her to choose his clothes for him, until she rather shook his faith in her judgment by ordering a sky-blue coat with 'glorious yellow buttons'; or with clumsy tenderness pathetically choosing a new cloak for her, as a present, 'not *very* ugly, only entirely unsuitable to the rest of my habiliments, being a brownish colour with orange spots.' We see him sent to smoke on the top of the cistern at Ampton Street, where he looks like an emblem over a tobacconist's door; or setting off with three maps of Great Britain and two of the world in his pocket, to find a house within twenty miles of London; or toiling along to Wimbledon with Gambardella, on a double velocipede; or giving his lectures, with the

light shining down on his head, and looking 'a surprisingly beautiful man.'

Geraldine Jewsbury says in one of her letters that she has not, like Jane, the gift of making people take an interest in those they never saw; and indeed, when Jane writes about people, it matters very little to our interest whether they are nonentities or celebrities, whether the picture is that of the maid who declared that if she were not allowed to leave without notice she would 'take fits,' as she had done in another place which did not suit her, and lie in bed for a year; or that of Macaulay beating even Carlyle himself hollow as a talker—'in quantity,' adds Carlyle's wife, loyally! There is John Carlyle, who appears as such a good friend in the early letters, but who lives very differently in the London life, clumsy in body and spirit, eternally blundering up and down the stairs in squeaky boots, and reading a great many books simultaneously which he rummages out one after another from all the different places where Jane has arranged them in the highest order; 'babbling and boring and holding

oyster-like to the external accommodations of one's house'; or fussing over the proof-sheets of his translation of Dante, and reminding her of the grey chicken at Craigenputtock that went about for six weeks cackling over its first egg; 'doing his best to resemble Solomon' in the conversation at a witty dinner-party; or, far worse, insisting on dragging her to the Surrey Zoological Gardens—'You may fancy how he would lead one this way and that, backwards and forwards, to this and the other beast and bird—and tell me its name and properties over and over and over again . . .'; and when she goes to bed exhausted on their return, disturbing her to say she must come upstairs and look through his telescope at the moons of Jupiter! Jane's irritation at her brother-in-law turned to real hatred finally, and her two last references to him are some of the bitterest she ever wrote. He had travelled with her to Scotland when she was in the midst of her terrible suffering in 1864; she writes to Carlyle:

John offered to accompany me here, but I declined. Fancy him telling me in my agony yesterday that if I

had ever done anything in my life this would not have been; that no poor woman with work to mind had ever had such an ailment as this of mine since the world began.

Two years later Carlyle writes to Jane of a woman driven to suicide by neuralgia, and she replies:

What a deal of misery it must take to drive a working woman to make way with her life! What does Dr. Carlyle make of such a case? No Idleness, no Luxury nor novel reading to make it all plain.

Jane watches, with those mocking eyes of hers, as Geraldine tries to capture her cautious brother-in-law, and really believes at one point that John is going 'to work himself up into a matrimonial sentiment for her'; but Geraldine plays her cards badly (as usual) and requires him to take her out too much to the theatre and so on, so that his incipient sentiment proves 'too weakly for bearing up against constant demands on his purse.' She has an eye for all such ironic human comedies—for her young cub of a nephew John Welsh, as he strews consternation in the Cheyne Row drawing-room by contradicting Carlyle, lecturing the lit-

erary visitors, and putting Lady Harriet Baring in her place; for Harriet Martineau presenting Carlyle with her ear-trumpet 'with a pretty, blushing air of coquetry'; for John Stuart Mill at Lady Harriet's, 'taking great pains to shew her that his opinions were right ones,' or for the drifting apart of George Henry Lewes and his wife. Jane had thought them a perfect pair of love-birds, always cuddling together on the same perch, but she notices that, figuratively speaking, the female lovebird has hopped off to some distance and appears to be taking a somewhat critical view of her mate: so much so, indeed, that when Lewes is raving about the beauty of another lady and praising her 'dark luxurious eyes' and 'smooth firm flesh,' his wife interposes drily, 'How do you know? Have you been feeling it?'

In contrast to her caricatures and satiric sketches, there are a whole series of cosy 'interiors' at Cheyne Row, with Jane at her most feminine and most mischievous and most sympathetic. Vainly making 'great eyes' at Erasmus Darwin as she tries to convey to him that she wants him to refuse

an invitation for her to tea with Elizabeth Pepoli; singing Scotch ballads to Leigh Hunt; listening while John Sterling reads her his 'positively splendid' poem of half-an-hour's length—'an allegorical shadowing of the union of the ideal and actual!'; or wooing Tennyson out of his ferocious shyness. He calls when Carlyle is out, so Jane, knowing how embarrassed he is said to be alone with women, decides she must make him forget her 'womaness.' She gets out pipes and tobacco, brandy and water, and starts him on a smoke, with the triumphant result that he stayed—

> for three mortal hours—talking like an angel—only exactly as if he were talking with a clever *man*, which—being a thing I am not used to—men always *adapting* their conversation to what they *take to be* a woman's taste—strained me to a terrible pitch of intellectuality.

Jeffrey was another of her tame literary lions—memories of whose taming took her back to Craigenputtock days. He is the only conquest of hers about whom Carlyle seems to have had a little spurt of jealousy. Jeffrey had early lost faith in Carlyle's literary future; there was a coolness be-

tween them, and we find Carlyle writing in 1831 that he desires 'vehemently' to get his wife's picture out of Jeffrey's hands, 'which I cannot but think are no wise worthy to hold it.'[11] Jane herself had been annoyed with Jeffrey. He had flirted with her, and at the same time treated her as a child, writing about her 'pet fancies—or convictions as you call them' in a way which, she says later, cost him her 'valuable correspondence.' But they made it up in the London days, and we find them on the old affectionate terms of mock-flirtation: terms which, indeed, surprised at least one stranger. For Jeffrey, having, as Jane puts it, 'a strong natural tendency for *cuddling* people (without the slightest earthly harm in it), and taking advantage of his being now near seventy years of age to indulge this innocent taste to the fullest extent,' kisses her 'plump on the lips' and fondles her and calls her 'my darling' when he comes to pay an afternoon call, which causes the young German Plattnauer, who was present, to comment afterward to Count-

[11] This is the early likeness reproduced opposite page 24.

ess Pepoli on 'the extraordinary character of *Scotch Salutations!*' Jeffrey was a link with youth and long ago, who brought only an atmosphere of light comedy to Jane's heart in middle age, but her description of another relic of those days—Mrs. Montague—is perhaps the most pathetic piece of writing in all the letters—pathetic, with a touch of the macabre in it—a figure something like Miss Haversham in *Great Expectations*. As was only natural, the acquaintanceship of Mrs. Montague and the Carlyles had never become real friendship. Jane's early letters from London are full of contemptuous little references to the pretences of intimacy from Irving's 'noble lady'; which never develop beyond protestations, and soon complete indifference was the only sentiment on both sides. Then, in 1853, Jane goes to an evening party at the Procters' (Mrs. Montague's daughter and son-in-law):

I saw the "Noble Lady" that night; and a strange, tragic sight she was! sitting all alone in a low-ceilinged confined room at the top of Procter's house; a French bed in a corner, some relics of the grand Bedford Square drawing-room (small pictures and the like) scat-

tered about. Herself stately, artistic as ever; not a line of her figure, not a fold of her dress, changed since we knew her first, twenty years and more. She made me sit on a low chair opposite to her, and began to speak of Edward Irving and long ago as if it were last year—last month! There was something quite overpowering in the whole thing: the Pagan grandeur of the old woman, retired from the world, awaiting death, as erect and unyielding as ever, contrasted so strangely with the mean bedroom at the top of the house, and the uproar of the company going on below. And the Past which she seemed to live in and move in felt to gather round me too, till I fairly laid my head on her lap and burst into tears! She stroked my hair very gently, and said, "I think, Jane, your manner never changes any more than your hair, which is still black, I see." . . . When I had stayed with her an hour or so, she insisted on my going back to the company, and embraced me as she never did before. Her embrace used to be so freezing always to my youthful enthusiasm: but this time she held me strongly to her heart, and kissed my cheeks many times heartily, like a mother.

Jane's manner never did change, as we can see from her letters. Letters, as she felt herself, are a poor substitute for a warm, breathing human personality; 'one cannot in writing eke out one's word

with tones of the voice—looks, gestures—an occasional *groan*—an occasional kiss!' Yet, to write is to speak after a sort, and charm can glow from a piece of paper in its own way too. Can glow in a greeting, 'I kiss you from ear to ear,' or in a bantering signature, 'your adorable wife'; in an opening sentence, '*Now stop! Have you eaten your breakfast? If not, eat it—the letter will not cool by keeping—the tea and toast will!*' or in an interruption, 'Oh, Mr. Forster, isn't it cold!'—in a reproof for neglect, 'My dear Mr. Forster—I died ten days ago and was buried at Kensal Green; at least you have no certainty to the contrary,' or in a letter announcing that she is not coming home for a few days, and has, moreover, had an invitation to Carlisle.

Now, dear Mr. Larkin, don't you foresee what will happen? Don't you feel as sure as if I had already told you, that I shall be wanting next to know about trains to Carlisle? the times—the fares? Yes, it is a fact. . . . You will help me, with your miraculous capacity of understanding Bradshaw, when I come? Shall I see you at tea, at six o'clock on Saturday evening?

'I never knew any one who could deal out little flatteries so pleasantly and judiciously,' says the recipient of this letter, and how much of the art of living, for women, is encompassed in that seemingly minor faculty, that peculiarly personal grace, that caressing of sensitive spots so delicately that the touch seems like happy inadvertence! Mrs. Montague said that Jane Carlyle's genius lay in the writing of little notes, but it showed itself equally in all human responses in which intuitive spontaneity of touch creates the character of those responses. To Carlyle, she may have been all that her epitaph said, as wife and helpmate to a man of genius; yet, somehow, to us, more of her essential quality seems caught in the famous verse Leigh Hunt wrote when he had visited her after he had had an illness, and impetuously she had jumped up and kissed him in welcome:

Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!

Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kissed me.

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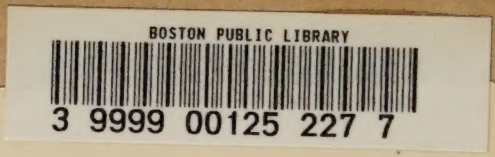
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Boston Public Library.
Sale of this material benefits the Library